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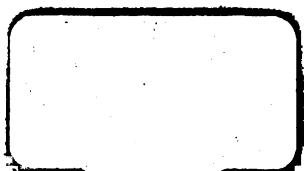
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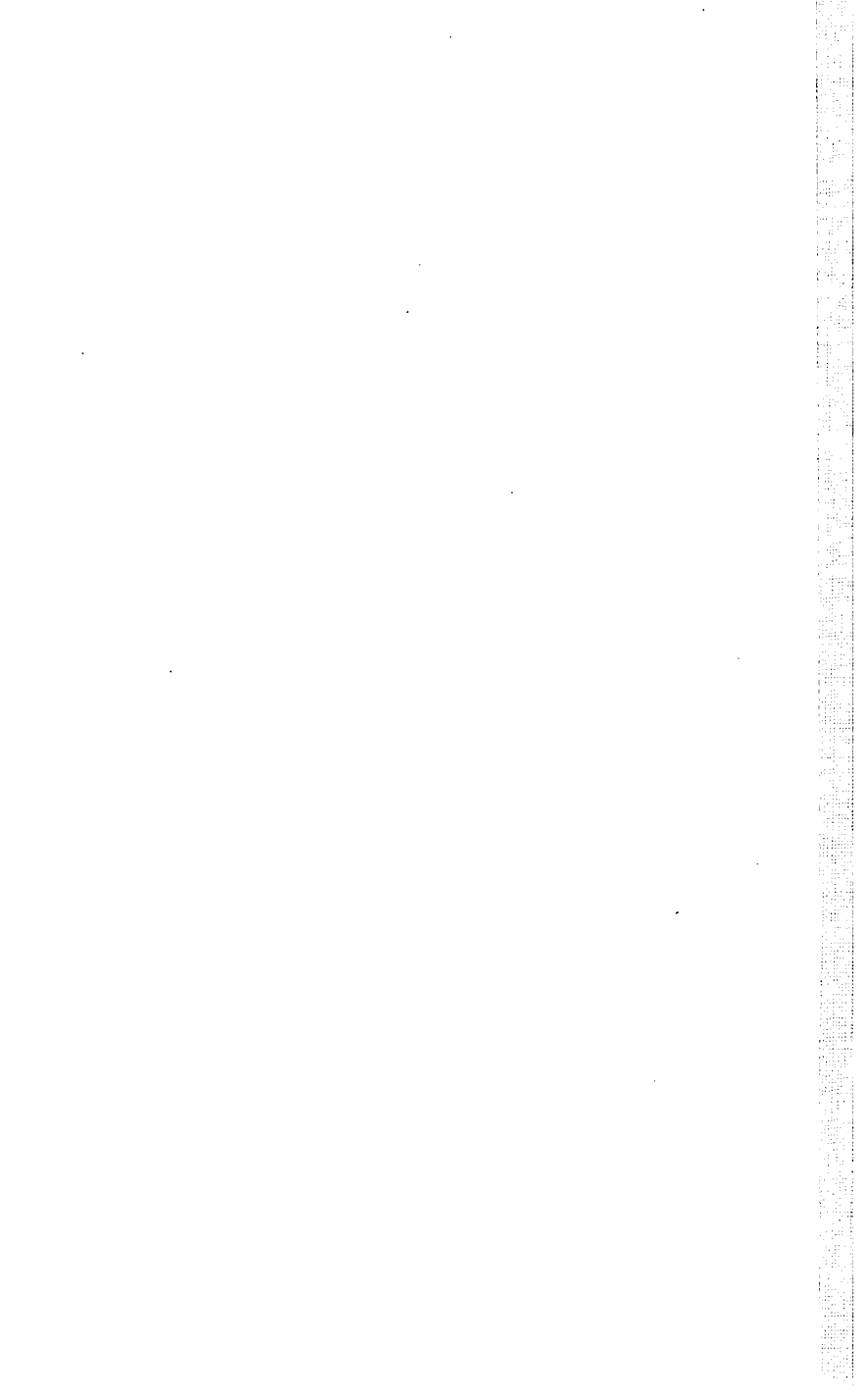
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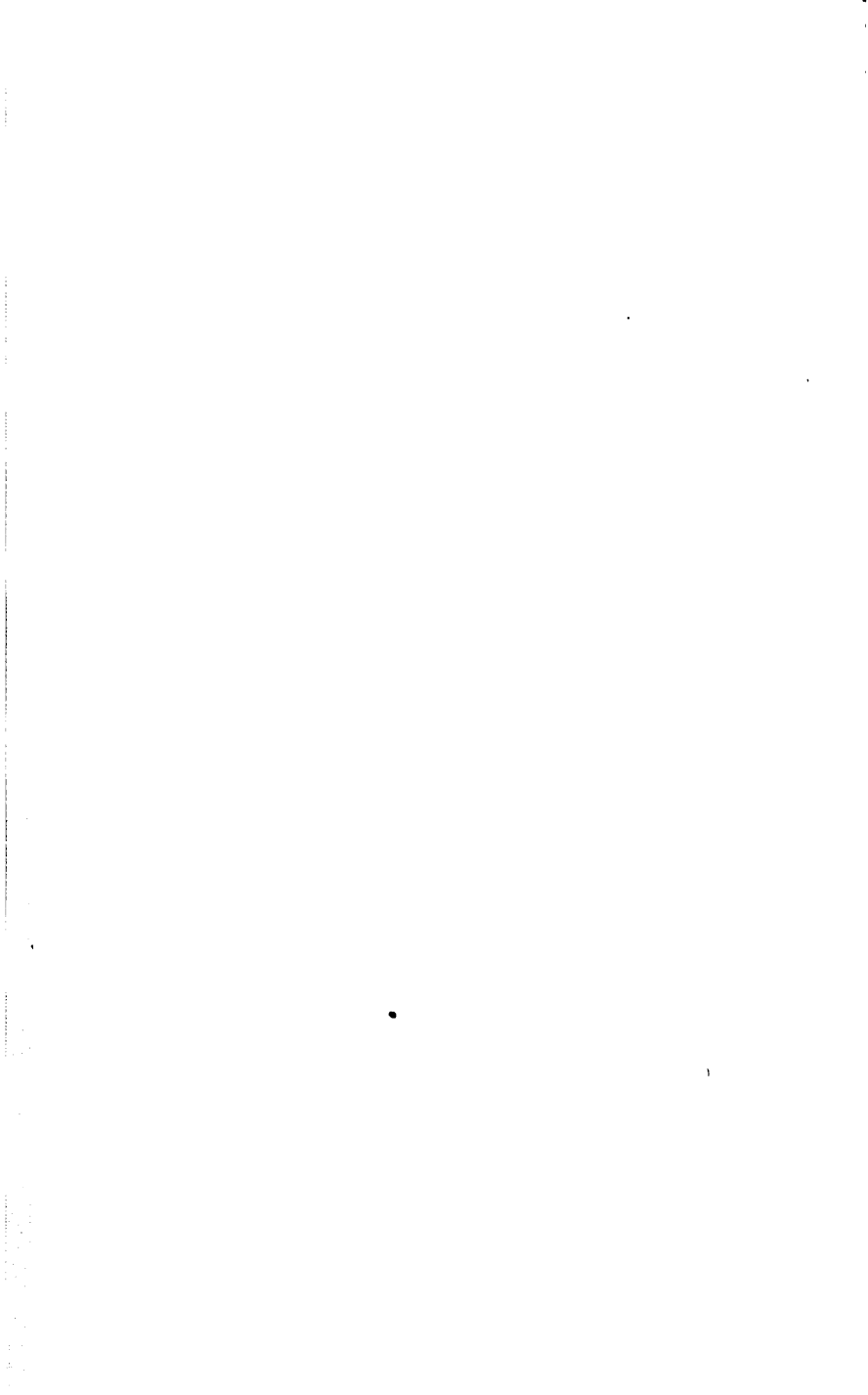


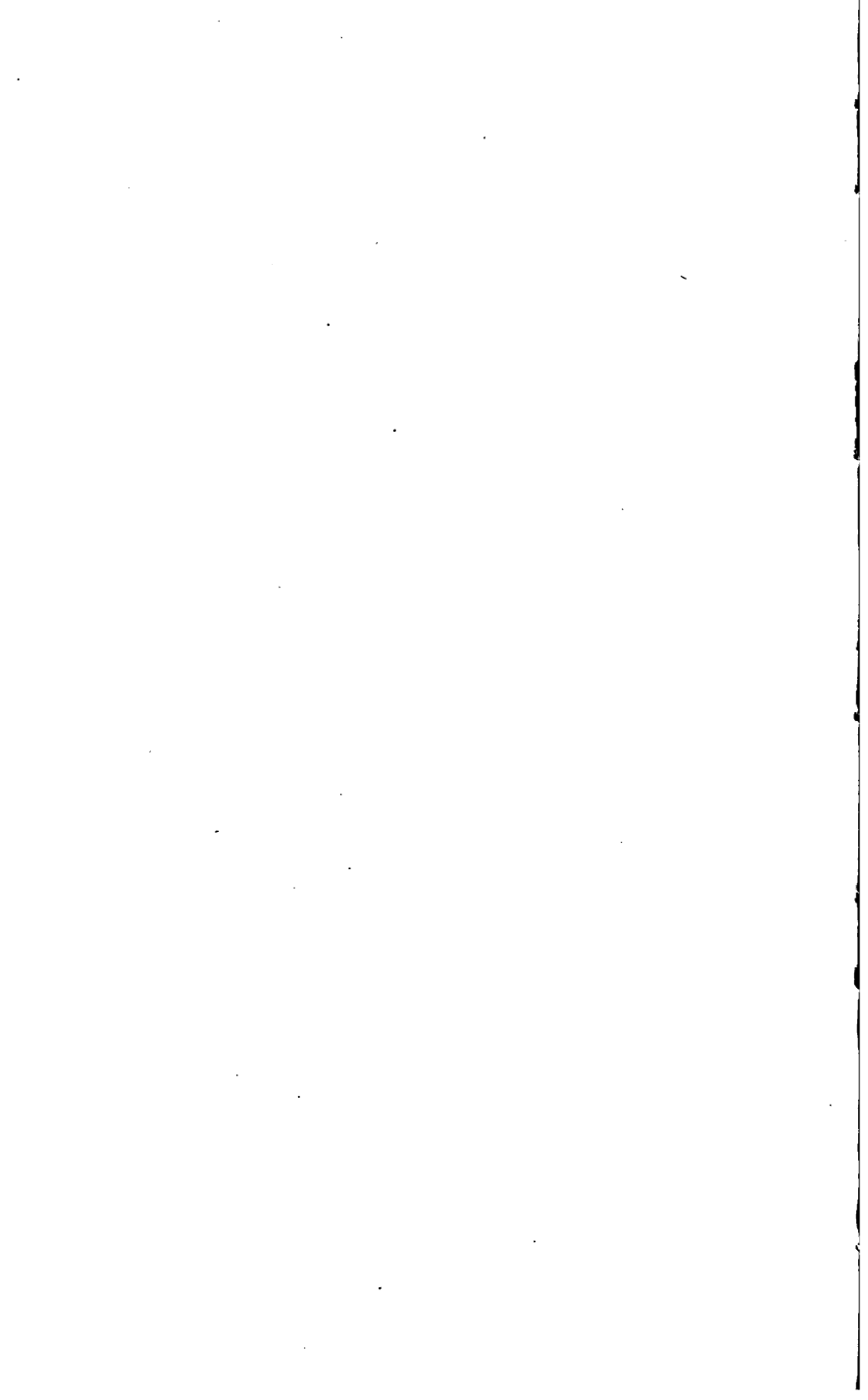
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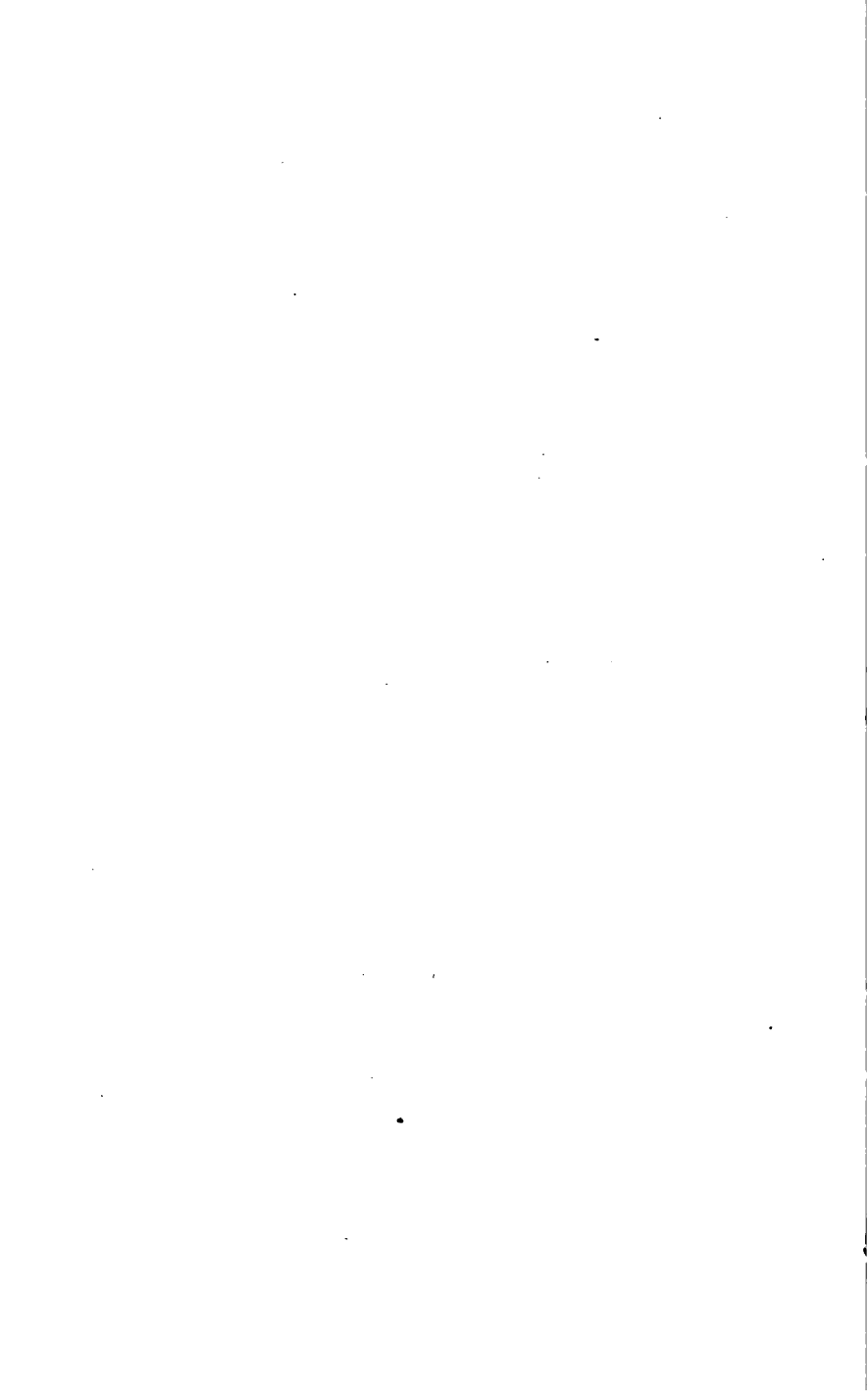






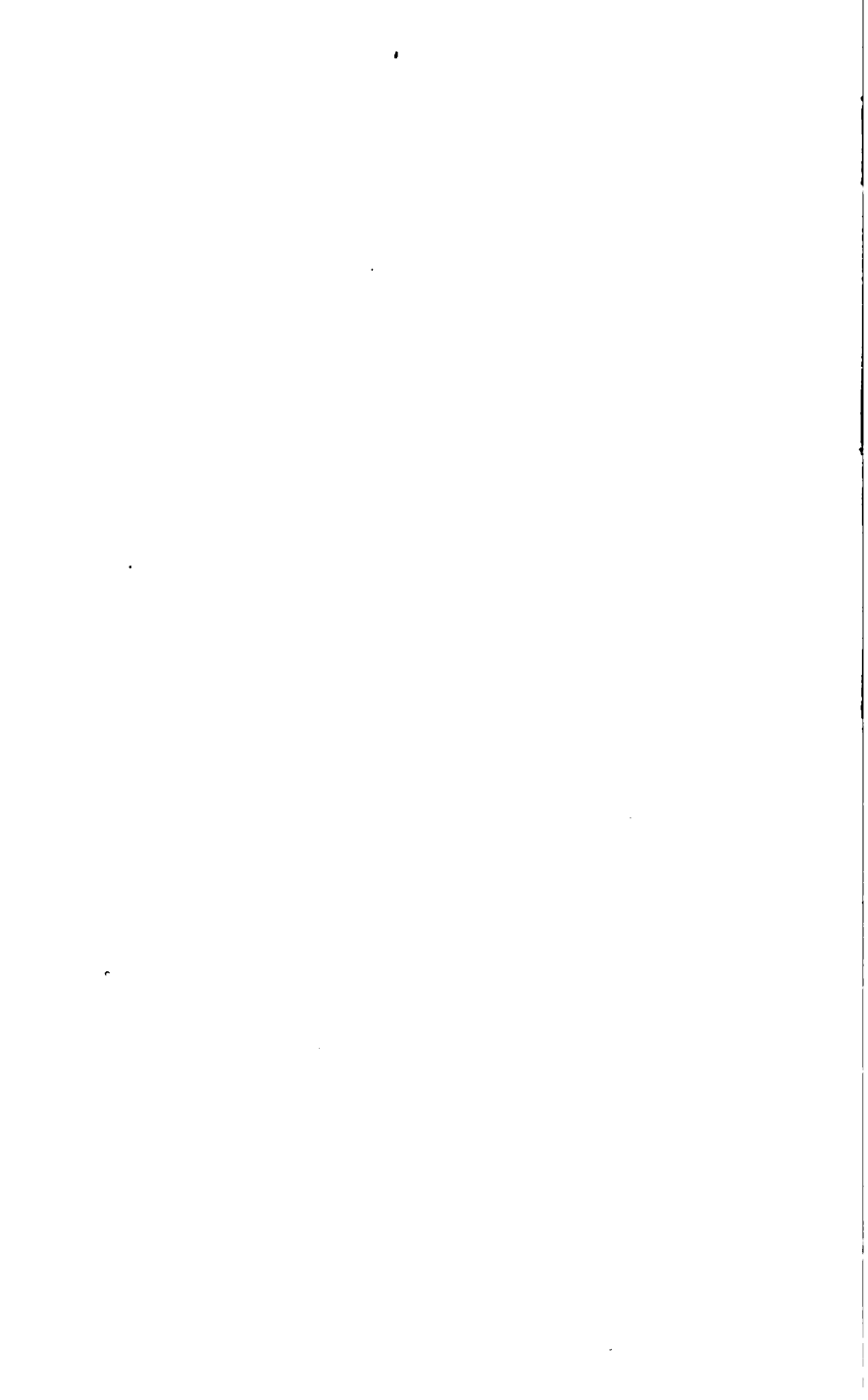






**THE**  
**ODYSSEY OF HOMER**

**BOOKS XIII.—XXIV.**



THE  
ODYSSEY OF HOMER .

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE IN  
THE SPENSERIAN STANZA

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*In magna volumine est*

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## P R E F A C E.

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THERE has been of late much discussion concerning the relative merit of various English metres as applied to the translation of Homer. Perhaps it has not been sufficiently borne in mind that in this case the abstract best, and the practical best, are not of necessity one. The employment in translation of a metre, however excellent in itself, which has not yet been thoroughly naturalized in original poetry, may be thought premature. But, to leave this out of the question, much must even then depend on the special aptitude of each translator, and a man may be able to render Homer worthily in one form, who would yet seem quite out of his element in the use of another. In practice, therefore, it is less important that a translator should select the absolutely best metre, than that

he should select, with of course due regard to the nature of the subject, that metre which promises to be most plastic and manageable in his own hands. Under the surface of Homer's equable manner there is, so to speak, such many-sided breadth of poetry, that no translator is likely to acquire any degree of practical mastery over more than one or two phases of it ; for a mind that could embrace and appropriate the whole would be irresistibly impelled to original composition. Such being the case, it would evidently be unwise to neglect the special conditions under which one's own ability might be made the most of, and consult only the demands of speculative theory in the choice of metre. The recognition of a just diversity of choice need not prevent us from acknowledging that a translator who finds in a strictly analogous metre the most ready and natural form of expression for his own powers, so far as they correspond with the characteristics of Homer, is likely to achieve something higher and better than his less fortunate competitors. I am far from putting forth any exclusive claim of such analogy in behalf of the Spenserian stanza ; nor do I think it the one

best possible form of English verse for the purpose to which I have applied it. Much may be said in its favour as a fair and true representative of the Homeric hexameter. This I hope soon to point out in detail elsewhere. Yet such a consideration would have weighed with me very little, but for the idea that, personally, I could embody my own feeling of Homer with greater success in Spenser's metre than in any other. It seems to me almost a truism that the absolutely fittest instrument for Homeric translation is, as Mr Arnold has so ably maintained, the English hexameter. Every lover of Homer ought to hope that the day may arrive when the Iliad and Odyssey will be reproduced in our native tongue with something like the majesty of their own rolling music. Much, however, as we may sympathize with the efforts of those who are now striving to attain, or to help on, this desirable consummation, it seems to be generally admitted that as yet no result, that can claim to be final, has been achieved in this direction. English hexameter versification is still in a great degree chaotic and unformed. This fact, and the interest I feel in the question, must be my excuse for



offering a few suggestions which may or may not be utterly valueless.

In Mr Arnold's version of the parting of Hector and Andromache in the Iliad, there occur two lines which I hold to be the very best and most Homeric hexameters that I have yet seen :—

But let me lie dead, with the dark earth mounded above me,  
Ere I hear thy cries, and thy captivity told of !

Again, no one can fail to perceive the metrical beauty of this line of Dr Hawtrey :—

Clearly the rest I behold of the dark-eyed sons of Achaia ;

or of this of Mr Kingsley :—

As when an osprey aloft, dark-eyebrowed, royally crested.

These four verses are perfectly rhythmical, both to the scholar and to the unlearned reader. They surely fulfil every condition which we can require in an English hexameter ; and, when we come to examine their structure, it is plain that the pleasure which they convey to the ear is due in the first instance to a far stricter observance of quantity (in such a way, however, as that the quantity shall coincide, not be at variance, with the accent)

than we are accustomed to meet with ; and, secondly, to the marked stress thrown upon the fourth foot by making it so unmistakeably spondaic. Hence arises a striking contrast between the fourth and fifth feet ; and on the skill with which this contrast is brought out the beauty of an English hexameter would seem mainly to depend. Now it may be objected that several thousand lines constructed without variation upon the model suggested would be too monotonous. Possibly the monotony would be less intrusive than one might be led to anticipate ; but, in any case, I believe that the requisite variety of rhythm might be obtained without trouble. We have seen the effect of a true spondee in the fourth foot followed by a true dactyl in the fifth. Probably an equally pleasing result might be obtained by the use of a dactyl in the fourth followed by accentual trochees or spondees in the fifth and sixth. Indeed I am not sure that this last system will not be found to be the most natural and idiomatic form of the English hexameter. In such a scheme the *three* last feet would occupy the same important function of specially distinguishing the hexameter that the *two* last occupy

in Homer and Virgil. The fundamental cadence I should be inclined to adopt for my own use would be this—

$\begin{array}{c} 4 \\ | \quad - \quad \cup \quad \cup \quad | \quad - \quad \bar{\cup} \quad | \quad - \quad \bar{\cup} \quad | \end{array}$

varied by such a change as

$\begin{array}{c} | \quad - \quad - \quad | \quad - \quad \cup \quad \cup \quad | \quad - \quad \bar{\cup} \quad | \end{array}$

a form already exemplified in the lines previously quoted. But I would avoid, rather than seek for, the following—

$\begin{array}{c} | \quad - \quad \cup \quad \cup \quad | \quad - \quad \cup \quad \cup \quad | \quad - \quad \bar{\cup} \quad | \end{array}$

because, by suppressing the contrast indicated above, it appears to be on the whole conducive to sing-song. The only remaining form—namely, that in which the three concluding feet are spondaic, or nearly so—will naturally be discarded, on account of its heaviness, except in rare instances and for the sake of some peculiar effect. The great point, however, is to consult the claims of prosodiacal scansion as much as possible, though *never* at the expense of a true accentual rhythm, the ear alone being the supreme arbiter of all English versification. We ought to avoid the in-

discriminate use of irregular feet, and that random accumulation of consonants which gives such a plunging and floundering effect to many of the otherwise beautiful verses of Longfellow. As example, however lame, is far better than precept, I have rendered, with an approximate obedience to the above rules, three short passages from the *Odyssey*, chosen because they appeared to give three distinct echoes of Homer's one style.

ODYSS. XII. 178.

Me to the mast they bind, upright, with the coiling cordage,  
 Then on the benches sit, and the white sea lash with the oar-blades.  
 When so near we came that a voice might be heard in calling,  
 Lightly the bark clave on, and they not failed to discern it,  
 But from the near coast came their sweet song pealing around me :  
 Come thou hither and rest, Odysseus, glory of Argos ;  
 Stay thy bark for a while, give ear to the Siren-singers.  
 Never hath mortal man yet passed in a black ship from us,  
 Ere he a strain first hear from the sweet shrill voice of the Sirens ;  
 So he rejoicing goes in the light of a larger wisdom.  
 Yea, all things we know which once by divine appointment  
 Argive men and people of Troy were fated to suffer.  
 We know all that is wrought in the wide earth, feeder of all things.

XII. 234.

We then, sorely afraid, went up through the sea-pass groaning.  
 Here in her cave lay Scylla, and there that wonder Charybdis  
 Gurgled deep in her throat, and sucked up the salt sea-water ;  
 Then, disgorging again, she frothed and spumed as a caldron  
 Spumes in flame of fire, and the foam of her white steam-vapour,

Shot from the raging deep, came down upon either summit.  
 When she gurgled again, and sucked up the salt sea-water,  
 Utter tumult stirred in the gulf, and the rock rebelled  
 Fiercely and far with noise of a thunder of warring waters,  
 And Earth's slime appeared in the womb of her dark-blue chambers

## XVIII. 124.

And unto him in turn did the wary Odysseus answer :  
 O Amphinomus, hear ! thou seemest to be wise-hearted ;  
 Such was thy father ever, I heard his rumour aforetime,  
 Nisus, Dulichian king, how great in glory and riches.  
 Thee for his son men show, thy words are the words of wisdom ;  
 Therefore now will I speak, I pray thee give ear and hearken.  
 Nothing weaker at all Earth breeds than a human creature,  
 No, not of all those lives that on earth are breathing and moving.  
 Still doth he boast in his heart no evil to find hereafter,  
 While that the gods lend health, and brace his knees in the battle.  
 But when the blessed gods bind fast their burden upon him  
 Then doth he bitterly bow to the yoke of a hard compulsion.  
 Such is the mind that dwells in the spirit of earth-born mortals  
 As is their day which still the Father sendeth upon them.  
 I too once among men myself was held to be happy,  
 And much folly I wrought in the pride of glory and power,  
 Fierce in my father's might and the arm of my noble brothers.  
 Therefore never at all let a man from his heart work evil,  
 But still calmly receive whatever the gods may give him.  
 But now, these that are here, I see them designing folly,  
 Wasting wealth in the house, and wife of a man insulting,  
 Who no longer, I say, far off from his friends and country  
 Lingers ; nay, he is near ; but first in thy home God hide thee,  
 Nor may'st thou him meet when he cometh again to his country !  
 Verily not without blood shall bring their cause to the balance  
 He and the suitors here, when once in his home he standeth.

The cæsura, which may be thought to have too

great a sameness in these lines, might be often agreeably varied by such a cadence as that of the following verse by Dr Hawtrey :—

Known to me well are the faces of all ; their names I remember.

It may be (for I have been unable to make myself acquainted with the literature on the subject) that something like what I have proposed has been already tried and found wanting. At any rate, we should never forget that the speculations of criticism will all have to give way before real creative power on the part of any poet who shall determine to perfect the hexameter. The opening verses of *Maud* would lead us to hope that we may not look in vain for this result. It would be a great achievement to make so fine a measure as the hexameter a possession of the English tongue for ever. In the mean time, particular verses of Dr Hawtrey and of Professors Arnold and Kingsley are, even if not admitted to be final specimens, yet eminently suggestive. Whatever tends to render the verse more definite, to make it easier for the reader and more difficult for the composer, is probably a step in the right direction. For myself, I prefer in practice the

Spenserian metre, which I believe to be equally well adapted for both Iliad and Odyssey.

I hope that the somewhat professional tone of the foregoing remarks will not lead any one to imagine that I cherish, as regards the work itself, any other object than that which I avowed in the beginning. All through this version it has been my wish to appeal to the popular heart rather than to the scholastic intellect. It would indeed have been hopeless for any one, whose learning and opportunities are so limited as mine, to write with the special view of conciliating scholars. But neither does such an end seem to me, on consideration, in itself worthy and adequate. Mr Arnold touches unconsciously its weak point when he aduces, by way of example, the names of particular

\* My attention has been called to the fact that a translation of the Iliad in Spenser's stanza, by Mr W. G. T. Barter, was published in 1854. The author of this version has endeavoured to reconcile the conflicting demands of word-for-word translation and an intricate system of rhyme. Hence the easy and flowing movement of Homer is unavoidably sacrificed in favour of resemblances which many lovers of poetry will think lower and less important. The ground I have sought to occupy is therefore, so far, a distinct one; but if there were any expressions in my former preface which seemed to imply that I was first in the field with a consecutive Spenserian version of Homer, I now readily resign the claim to my predecessor.

men whose probable judgment the translator ought to contemplate. It is in the very fact that we cannot write specially for scholars without thinking of persons, that the fatal objection to his advice becomes manifest. Our mind is no longer in tune with the mind of Homer. When the spirit within us is in any degree one with his, we have so far a warrant of success ; but, for this to be the case, Homer's audience must be our audience, and his end our end—that is, we must write in order to please and instruct the people. Whatever helps to contract our aspirations within a narrower limit, stifles in a measure our sympathy with the poet himself, and introduces a new tendency to failure. A translation may be at once true in the details and false in the sum ; just as in copying a picture it is possible to render touch for touch, and yet fail to interpret the pervading idea ; or, in music, to be exact in the mechanical performance, and yet rob the full strain of its inspiration. There is a shade of danger that translators who think of learned critics will be led to forget this, and devote their energies too exclusively to those minor points which the scholar alone can appreciate. I am of course not asserting that Mr Ar-



nold's tribunal is a bad one in the abstract (this would be mere absurdity), but that it is a bad one for the translator to keep in mind during the process of composition. It will tend to foster ingenuity at the expense of imagination, and to encourage an elegant dexterity of expression rather than wholesome vigour and broad dramatic truth. Hence the grandeur and simplicity of style which Mr Arnold so eloquently inculcates will be removed farther out of our reach than ever. The true principle would seem to be this : strive to see vividly what Homer sees, and then, as nearly as may be in the poet's own words, to stamp this vision upon the brain of ordinary men ; remembering always that it is a nobler success to represent the manner and the idea than to copy the phrase, and that, when the two forms of resemblance are at strife, the lower excellence must yield to the higher, the particular truth to the general, the sign to the thing signified. Let the result of my labours be what it may, I feel that on the whole I have aimed consistently at the right mark. I can truly affirm that the *Odyssey* has been to me not so much a verbal enigma to be solved, as a phase of human life to be realized.

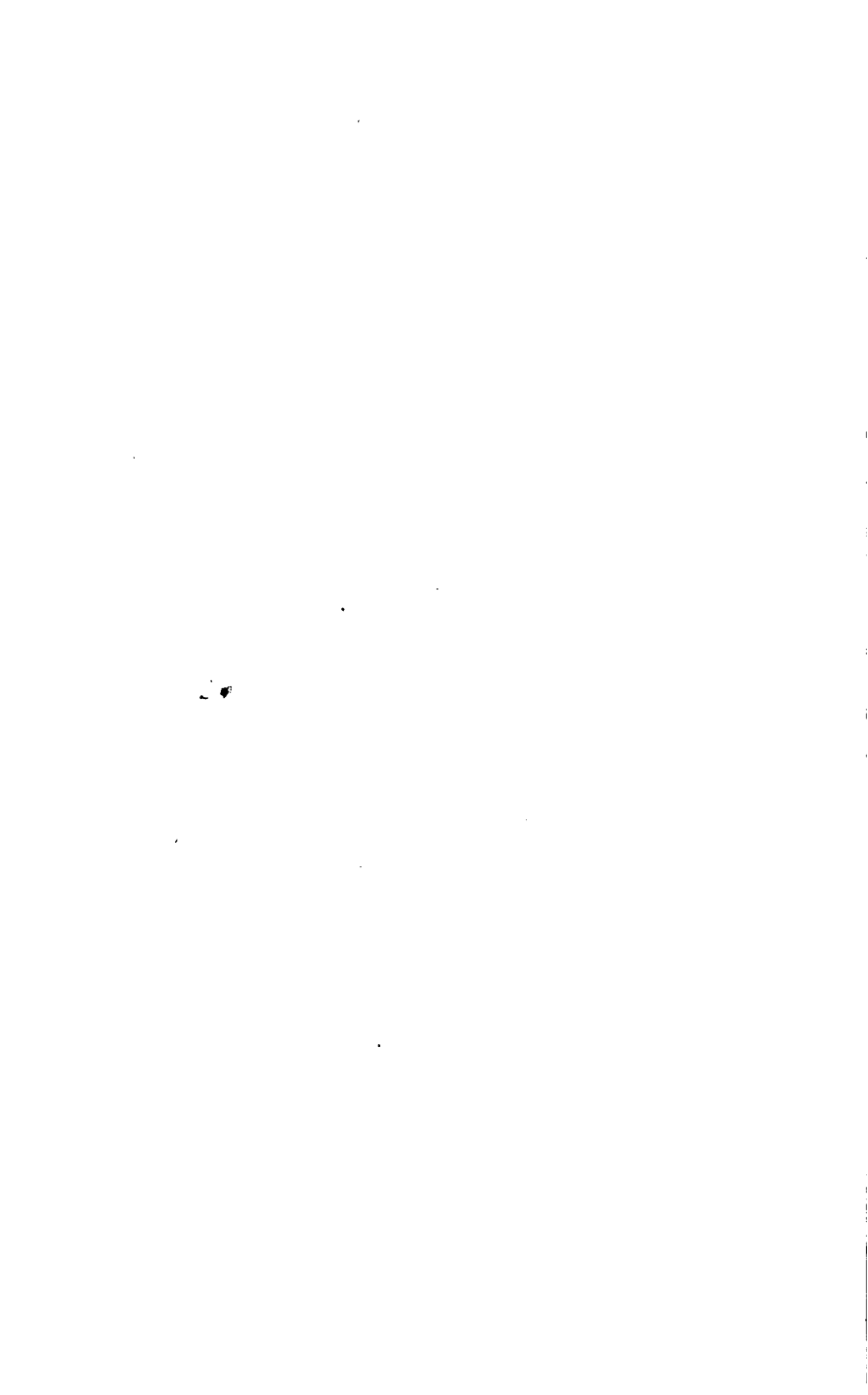
## CONTENTS OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

BOOK	PAGE
XIII. ODYSSEUS ARRIVES IN ITHACA—HIS INTERVIEW WITH ATHENE,.....	1
XIV. ODYSSEUS IS ENTERTAINED BY THE SWINEHERD EUMÆUS,	23
XV. TELEMACHUS, WITH THEOCLYMENUS THE SEER, RE- TURNS TO ITHACA—THE STORY OF EUMÆUS,.....	49
XVI. ODYSSEUS DISCOVERS HIMSELF TO TELEMACHUS,.....	77
XVII. ODYSSEUS, IN THE DISGUISE OF AN AGED BEGGAR, COMES TO HIS OWN HOUSE—THE DEATH OF HIS DOG ARGUS,.....	101
XVIII. ODYSSEUS FIGHTS WITH THE BEGGAR IRUS—THE WARN- ING OF AMPHINOMUS,.....	131
XIX. THE INTERVIEW OF ODYSSEUS WITH PENELOPE—EU- RYCLEIA'S RECOGNITION OF ODYSSEUS—THE DREAM OF PENELOPE,.....	151
XX. ODYSSEUS IS INSULTED BY CTESIPPUS—THE SUITORS EXPUL THEOCLYMENUS,.....	181
XXI. THE TRIAL OF THE BOW—ODYSSEUS DISCOVERS HIM- SELF TO EUMÆUS AND PHILETIUS,.....	201
XXII. THE SLAYING OF THE SUITORS,.....	223
XXIII. ODYSSEUS DISCOVERS HIMSELF TO PENELOPE,.....	245
XXIV. ODYSSEUS DISCOVERS HIMSELF TO LAERTES, AND IS ESTABLISHED IN HIS KINGDOM,.....	265



## BOOK XIII.

ODYSSEUS ARRIVES IN ITHACA—HIS INTERVIEW WITH  
ATHENE.



## BOOK XIII.

---

1

HE ceasing, all sat charmed in the great halls,  
Mute, till the lord Alcinous answer gave :  
“ Odysseus, who hast come within my walls,  
No more, I think, wild storm and wandering wave  
Shall drive thee homeless, as they erewhile drave ;  
After long woes, return at last is thine.  
Therefore this charge I give you, chieftains brave,  
Who here still quaff the senatorial wine,  
And in my fair halls list the minstrel’s voice divine—

2

“ For now, behold, in the well-burnished chest  
Lies store of gold in quaint devices wrought,  
Changes of raiment for our godlike guest,  
And all the choice gifts that our chiefs have brought ;  
Yet have I still this counsel in my thought—  
Let each one here a tripod, large of weight,  
And caldron offer, that he want for nought.  
These will we pay for by a public rate ;  
Else, singly, it were hard to bear a charge so great.”

## 3

So spake the king, and all assenting heard,  
And each passed homeward to his couch of rest.  
But when the rosy-fingered Dawn appeared,  
They to the ship their eager course addressed,  
And brought the brazen tribute, all their best ;  
Which the divine strength of Alcinous there  
Stowed with his own hands 'neath the benches, lest  
Aught should the seamen hinder, whenso'er  
They to the great oars lean, and through the billows fare.

## 4

Thence for the feast they sought the kingly hall,  
And the divine strength of Alcinous then  
To cloud-wrapt Zeus Kronion, lord of all,  
Offered an ox in sacrifice. So when  
Burned were the thighs, they feasted, and agen  
Demodocus the minstrel made them song.  
But oft Odysseus turned his wistful ken,  
While in his breast the home-desire beat strong,  
On the sun's orb, which seemed to linger all too long.

## 5

As when one longeth for his evening fare,  
For whom two wine-dark steers the livelong day  
Drag through the field in furrows the slow share ;  
He, on the watch, still toiling as he may,  
Gladly beholds the sunlight fade away,  
Then seeks his supper, while the spent knees ache—  
Thus for Odysseus did the light decay ;  
And with a glad heart in the midst he spake,  
But to Alcinous most his urgent suit did make :

## 6

“ Alcinous king, o’er all pre-eminent,  
Pour ye libations, send me scatheless hence !  
Farewell ! for I have gained my full content,  
Convoy and gifts—which Heaven for good dispense !  
So may I find pure and in safe defence  
Both wife and friends when I return ! May ye,  
Crowned by the gods with all heart-excellence,  
Blest evermore with wives and children be,  
Happy in home and state, from every evil free !”

## 7

Then all assented to dismiss their guest,  
For that his word with fate accordeth plain.  
Alcinous then the herald straight addressed :  
“ Wine mix for all, Pontonous. Once again  
Pour we to Zeus, then quickly o’er the main  
Escort our dear guest to his fatherland !”  
Forthwith the herald mixed the wine right fain,  
And bore it round to each. They rising stand,  
And to the blessèd gods pour forth with reverent hand.

## 8

And lo ! divine Odysseus, rising up,  
These wingèd words to queen Arete saith,  
While in her hands he gives the double cup :  
“ O be thou happy till old age or death,  
Which in all lands all mortals visiteth,  
Find thee, O queen, in some far distant day !  
I now sail homeward. Here may thy life’s breath  
With husband, children, citizens, I pray,  
Glide in pure gladness deep, when I am far away !”



## 9

Thus having spoken, o'er the threshold passed  
Divine Odysseus : and Alcinous king  
Sent from his gates a herald, who with haste  
Him to the shore and the swift bark should bring.  
Straightway the queen, her maidens summoning,  
Dismissed them to the shore. One took the vest  
And well-washed robe ; another following  
Bare in her arms the fair-compacted chest ;  
Also the third brought food and red wine of the best.

## 10

All which, when now to the sea's marge they came,  
They to the noble seamen straight resigned,  
Who in the hollow vessel stowed the same,  
And on the ship's deck near the stern assigned  
Rugs to Odysseus, that nor wave nor wind  
Should wake him, and white linen fair to view.  
He silent on the well-spread couch reclined.  
They from the perforated stone undo  
The hawser, and then man the seats in order due.

## 11

Soon 'neath the pulse of oar-blades flashed the deep,  
And slumber on Odysseus' eyelids fell,  
Sweet, calm, and stirless, more like death than sleep.  
And as four stallions that in speed excel,  
Through the plain flying, their swift course impel,  
Lifted with keen lash by the charioteer,  
And without pause fulfil their journey well—  
So the ship, lifted through the billowy mere,  
Rushed whitening in her lee the loud waves far and near.

## 12

Thus she the deep clave safely, nor on high  
Might the fleet falcon with her oars keep pace,  
Though far the swiftest of all fowls that fly,  
So glancingly she glided o'er the face  
Of ocean, carrying one that held like place  
With gods in wisdom—who aforetime bare  
Griefs without number, and in evil case  
Sank toiled with war and wave, but now lay there,  
Stretched in a stirless sleep, forgetting all his care.

## 13

When rose the star most brilliant, which through heaven  
News of the light of early Dawn doth bring,  
Then the good bark on Ithaca was driven—  
And lo! the port of Phorcys, old sea-king,  
Where on each side the shore puts forth a wing  
And clasps the bay with headlands. These restrain  
The hoarse floods which the outer hurricanes fling,  
And well-built ships, which come there from the main,  
Lie without hawsers safe on that still marble plain.

## 14

And a thick olive at the haven-head  
Stands near a cavern, deep dark lovely lair,  
Shrine of the Naiad-nymphs, with vases spread  
And bowls of stone; wild bees make honey there;  
And on stone looms the Nymphs weave raiment fair,  
Sea-purpled, wondrous; and fresh fountains flow.  
Northward lie gateways trod by men, but ne'er  
Can steps of mortals by the south doors go;  
None save diviner feet that sacred path may know.

## 15

Here, well aware, they ran the bark ashore.  
She to the half keel through the shelving sand  
Clave furrowing, such strong seamen plied the oar ;  
Who from the well-built benches leap to land,  
And first Odysseus to his native strand,  
Wrapt in white linen and rich rugs, bear swift.  
Him on the shore, yet sleeping, near at hand  
They place, then quickly each resplendent gift,  
Seal of Athene's favour, from the vessel lift.

## 16

All these beside the olive-stem they set,  
A little from the path which that way led,  
That no chance comer spoil his goods, ere yet  
Sleep from the eyelids of Odysseus fled.  
They then pass homeward. Nor the threatenings dread  
From the Earth-shaker's memory yet retired,  
Which he against that godlike hero's head  
Breathed at the first, with indignation fired—  
He now, remembering these, the mind of Zeus enquired :

## 17

“ O Father Zeus, what reverence can I win  
Here among gods, when I but reap disdain  
From mortal men, Phæacians, mine own kin ?  
I said Odysseus should go home with pain,  
Yet his return I made not wholly vain  
Since Thou hadst sworn it. Lo ! the man doth sleep  
In Ithaca, sent safely o'er the main  
With raiment, brass, and gold, a measureless heap,  
Beyond his share of spoil, had he from Ilion's steep.

## 18

“Sailed scatheless.” Cloud-compeller Zeus replied :  
 “ Wide in dominion, Shaker of the Earth,  
 What hast thou spoken ! Should the gods deride  
 Thee, their great elder, and their best in worth ?  
 Not in the realms of heaven shalt thou find dearth  
 Of reverence—thus to slight thee, hard it were.  
 But if some evil-doer of mortal birth  
 Defy thy power, avenging doom is near ;  
 Work what thy will desires, and what thy heart holds dear.”

## 19

Poseidon, the Earth-shaker, answering said :  
 “ Now would I soon avenge me, cloud-wrapt Sire,  
 But evermore thine own decrees I dread,  
 And shrink and shudder at thy fury’s fire.  
 Lo ! this Phæacian convoy in mine ire,  
 Homeward returning, in the sea’s dark swell  
 Fain would I break, that they no more aspire  
 Free road to render where I like not well,  
 And I would hide with hills the city where they dwell.”

## 20

To whom the Cloud-compeller spake again :  
 “ My well-beloved, this counsel to my mind  
 Seems in the issue neither void nor vain :  
 What time the terrace of their town is lined  
 With the whole people, who look forth to find  
 Their ship returning, in the shoreward swell  
 Strike her unmoveable by wave or wind,  
 A ship-like stone—that great amazement quell  
 Men’s souls—and hide with hills the city where they dwell.”

## 21

When the Earth-shaker heard that firm assent  
 Of the great Father, he to Scheria strand  
 And the fair home of the Phæacians went ;  
 There, waiting for a while, deep vengeance planned.  
 And lo ! the ship seafaring nigh to land  
 Came, lightly furrowing the blue waves ; but he  
 Rose in his wrath, and with down-striking hand  
 Made her a stone, and in the nether sea  
 Clenched the dead keel with roots, and thence moved instantly.

## 22

But the Phæacians wingèd words began,  
 That ship-famed people, masters of the oar ;  
 And, pale with wonder, man enquired of man : [shore,  
 " Good heaven ! what strange chance, ere she reach our  
 Chains fast our vessel in the billows hoar ?  
 Surely but now we marked both stern and stem."  
 Thus with wide eyes they talked, but evermore  
 Failed to discern the god's dire stratagem,  
 Till at the last the king Alcinous spake to them :

## 23

" Gods, the old oracles come back to me  
 Which in far years I heard my father tell,  
 How that Poseidon thinketh scorn that we  
 Love to guide all men through the waters well,  
 And, on a day when we good course impel  
 Homeward, for this he would the convoy break,  
 And hide with hills the city where we dwell.  
 Such was the prophecy the old man spake,  
 And all his words this day their due fulfilment take.

## 24

“Come, be persuaded, let us cease to guide  
Each guest and stranger through the seas. Now go,  
And for Poseidon twelve choice bulls provide,  
And we will slay them at his shrine, if so  
He, of his grace, some mercy deign to show,  
Nor hide with hills our city.” Thus he said.  
They, struck with terror, the choice bulls bestow ;  
And all their chiefs to king Poseidon made  
Due sacrifice, and standing round the altar prayed.

## 25

Divine Odysseus from his sleep anon  
Rose up, nor knew the long-lost land ; for then  
Pallas Athene poured a mist thereon,  
Making the place seem diverse in his ken,  
And veiled him also from the eyes of men,  
Thus to reveal each several fact aright,  
That him nor wife nor friend nor citizen  
Know for their lord, till he the fell despite  
Of the whole suitor-train should violently requite.

## 26

Hence o'er the land there hung a cloud of change.  
Cliffs, and tall forests waving their rough hair,  
Lines of long pathway, to the king seemed strange,  
Harbours, and hills, and rocks that scale the air.  
So on a sudden he uprose, and there,  
Over his native fields in sore surprise  
Gazing, his sorrow did with groans declare,  
And smote with vehement palms on both his thighs,  
And a sad word spake forth with dark tears in his eyes :

## 27

"Ay me! what mortal souls inhabit here?  
 Despiteful, wild, unjust, or apt to love  
 The suppliant stranger and the gods revere?  
 Where to bestow these goods, which way to move,  
 I know not: better have come poor, than prove  
 Such perils—so might I have found some king  
 Who yet might send me to my land with love!  
 These treasures to conceal is no light thing,  
 Nor can I leave them here, lest spoilers on them spring.

## 28

"Gods! the Phæacian chiefs, too late I see,  
 Were not in all things wise nor just! who now  
 To a far different land have carried me—  
 Who plighted troth safe convoy to allow  
 To Ithaca, but have not kept their vow!  
 Zeus, guard of suppliants, who o'er men doth keep  
 Watch, and with vengeance every crime endow,  
 Pay them for this!—Now will I count this heap  
 Of treasures, lest perchance they robbed me in my sleep."

## 29

So he of tripods, caldrons, raiment, gold,  
 Counted full tale; anon with many a tear,  
 Where on the beach the roaring waters rolled,  
 Crept, moaning his dear earth. And lo! came near  
 Athene, like some youthful overseer  
 Of flocks, all-delicate, as a chieftain's son.  
 She round her shoulders a rich cloak did wear  
 Twice folded, and her shining feet had on  
 Fair sandals; in her hand a steely javelin shone.

## 30

Glad was Odysseus, and came near and spake :  
“ Friend, since thee first upon this soil I see,  
Hail thou, nor wrong me ! For my sorrow’s sake  
Deign to preserve these treasures and save me !  
For to thy knees I come, and pray to thee  
As to a god. This also tell me true—  
What land, what state, what people here may be.  
Is this some island very plain to view,  
Or mainland-coast down-sloping toward the billows blue ?”

## 31

To whom Athene, stern-eyed goddess, spake :  
“ Stranger, thou lackest sense or com’st from far,  
Who question of this soil art fain to make.  
Not nameless is it. Many men there are,  
Who in the west or toward the morning star  
Inhabit, and our country know full well.  
Rough is the land, nor can one drive a car  
Through the rude ways, for steeds impassable,  
Yet not too poor, though least in space our shores excel.

## 32

“ For still much plenty both of corn and wine  
Lives in the land, and the life-showering dew  
Nurtures the fields, and fruitful rains divine ;  
For goats and steers both rocks and glades renew  
Sweet pasture ; woods of every grain and hue  
Flourish ; and fair streams flow the whole year round.  
Hence even in Troia, if they tell me true,  
Far off, O stranger, from Achaian ground,  
Doth echo of the name of Ithaca resound.”



## 33

She spake. Divine Odysseus in his heart,  
Glad from innumerable toils, the name  
Of his dear country hailed ; but with fine art  
Held his own counsels, and with dexterous aim  
Did feignèd answer to Athene frame.  
For always in his breast he wielded well  
Sleights of a gainful prudence, still the same  
In keen wit, whatsoever chance befel.  
Thus he this feignèd tale in wingèd words did tell :

## 34

“ Even in wide Crete, far across the floods,  
I heard of Ithaca, which now I see.  
There to my children I left half my goods,  
And with this treasure from my home did flee.  
For swift Orsilochus was slain by me,  
Child of Idomeneus, who in wide Crete  
All men surpassed in fleetness—for that he  
Sought to have robbed me of my portion meet  
Of Trojan spoil, won fairly in the war’s fierce heat.

## 35

“ For that same spoil I took my battle-scars,  
And clave the troublous deep ; but he took fire  
Because I led mine own band in the wars  
Of Ilion, not subservient to his sire.  
So him, returned, I smote dead in mine ire,  
Where in the fields I lurked with one true friend.  
He near the wayside did with spears expire,  
While Night the wide sky did with blackness blend.  
Thence, with the blood still secret, I securely wend.

## 36

“So having slain him with sharp steel, I thence  
On shipboard, to the proud Phœnicians, passed,  
And there gave suppliant words and large expense  
Of gifts. Anon I urge them to sail fast  
For sandy Pylos through the ocean vast,  
Or divine Elis, where the Epeians sway,  
And there to land me. But the stormy blast  
Drave them reluctant a far different way—  
Not that they wished at all to foil me or betray.

## 37

“We hither in our wanderings come by night,  
Row to the haven with all zeal, nor eat  
Though sorely hungered, but with speed alight  
And on the shore lie down. There slumbers sweet,  
Born of exceeding toil, mine eyelids greet.  
Meanwhile the men my goodly treasures take,  
Range them beside me sleeping, and retreat,  
And to Sidonian coast their voyage make.  
But I stay lonely here, with grieved heart nigh to break.”

## 38

He ended ; and Athene smiling there  
Quick with her hand caressed him, and put on  
Mien of a woman very tall and fair,  
Skilled in all splendid works, and spake anon :  
“Shrewd beyond reckoning were thy paragon,  
Or man or god, in fencings of keen wit.  
O versed in knavish wiles, insatiate one !  
Wilt thou not here in thine own land remit  
These forgeries, which so firmly to thy soul are knit ?

## 39

"But of these things no longer take we heed ;  
 Truly we both know wisdom passing well ;  
 Thou all thy fellow-men dost far exceed  
 In word-inventive wit ; and I excel  
 In fame of counsels all the gods that dwell  
 In the wide heaven. Nor can thine heart forget  
 Athene, child of Zeus. Needs not to tell  
 How in all labours I stood by thee yet,  
 And toward thee firm goodwill in the Phæacians set.

## 40

"Now a dark scheme with thee to weave I come,  
 To hide that wealth which the Phæacians gave  
 Through my suggestion, when they brought thee home,  
 And to unfold what sorrows thou shalt have  
 In thine own house—which thou with spirit brave  
 Suffer in sad compulsion, and be strong !  
 Nor yet reveal to wife or friend or slave  
 How thou returnest from thy wanderings long ;  
 Silently chew thy griefs, and bear the brunt of wrong !"

## 41

To whom the man of many counsels spake :  
 "Hardly, O goddess, even the wise may know  
 Thy form, since every semblance thou dost take.  
 Thou lov'dst me, I remember, long ago,  
 When in the Ilian wars we suffered woe.  
 But since we overthrew old Priam's keep,  
 And the god drave us o'er the wild sea-flow,  
 No more I meet thee, howsoe'er I weep,  
 Nor cam'st thou, child of Zeus, to aid me in the deep.

## 42

“ Always I wandered with a grief-torn heart,  
 Till the gods loosed me at the last from pain ;  
 Then, in Phæacian land, thou *didst* impart  
 Words of sweet counsel, and my way make plain.  
 Now by thy Sire have mercy ! All in vain  
 Hearing of sunward Ithaca, I stand  
 Lost on an alien earth. I fear thee fain  
 To foil and leave me with sharp taunts unmanned—  
 Do I behold indeed mine own dear native land ? ”

## 43

Him the stern-eyed Athene answered then :  
 “ Such doubts for ever in thy breast abide ;  
 Whence I thee love beyond the sons of men,  
 And in thy grief stand always at thy side,  
 Since a wise tongue thou wieldest, nobly tried  
 In counsels. Other men had soon been moved,  
 Thus new from wanderings, to have satisfied  
 Yearning desire with sight of whom they loved ;  
 But thou all-patient pausest, till thy wife be proved—

## 44

“ Till she be proved who in thy halls doth sit,  
 And, wasted with sore anguish day and night,  
 Tears for her lord doth never intermit.  
 I from the first knew thou must here alight,  
 Though reft of thy companions, void of might ;  
 But with Poseidon who thy course did bind,  
 My father’s brother, I willed not to fight ;  
 Who a relentless anger in his mind  
 Stored for his dear son’s sake, whom thou *didst* erewhile blind.

## 45

"Come, view thy dear land, and believe me now!  
 This is the port of sea-king Phorcys' old,  
 And this the olive at the haven's brow.  
 Yonder the deep dark lovely cave behold,  
 Shrine of the Naiad-nymphs! These shades enfold  
 The stone-roofed bower, wherein thou oft hast stood,  
 While to the Nymphs thy frequent vows uprolled,  
 Steam of choice hecatombs and offerings good.  
 Neritus hill stands there, high-crowned with waving wood."

## 46

So spake Athene, and dissolved the mist.  
 Plainly Odysseus all things marked, and there,  
 Rejoicing in his soul, the boon earth kissed,  
 And to the Nymphs with lifted hands made prayer:  
 "Virgins of Zeus, ye Naiads, whom I ne'er  
 Hoped to revisit, hail! We to your shrine  
 Vows and sweet offerings, as of old, will bear,  
 If the Zeus-born Maid-warrior help divine  
 Deign to vouchsafe, and prosper my son's life and mine!"

## 47

Therewith he ended, and Athene spake:  
 "Be brave, and doubt not! In this safe retreat  
 Hide we thy wealth, and then new counsels take."  
 So, through the cave's mouth passing, with slow feet  
 She tracked the chambers, and with care discreet  
 Hid gold, brass, raiment, and made fast the door.  
 Then by the sacred olive taking seat,  
 They, for the suitors weaving doom, explore  
 Dire vengeance. First Athene did these words outpour:

48

“ Zeus-born Laërtiades, Odysseus wise,  
Scheme in dark net these shameless to enthrall  
And mar with violent hand their revelries !  
Three years they wield dominion in thy hall,  
And thy divine wife to espousals call  
Vexed with their gifts. For she with tears doth rue  
Thy lost return, and though to each and all  
She still sends hope and promise, while they woo,  
Yet doth her heart the while far other thoughts ensue.”

49

He of the many counsels answering saith :  
“ Of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, I  
In mine own halls, by Heaven, the evil death,  
Dark, without warning, had been like to die,  
If thou, dear goddess, from the homes on high  
Hadst not descended, to make all things plain  
And with thine arms to help me by-and-by !  
Come, weave me counsel neither void nor vain,  
That I red vengeance reap till not a man remain !

50

“ But staid thou near, and such bold strength inspire  
As when we loosed the shining tiars of Troy.  
If thou stand near me to inbreathe like fire,  
Then with three hundred could I fight with joy !”  
To whom Athene : “ When dread works employ  
Thy fierce hands, verily I will not be far ;  
Yea, thou with me shalt many souls destroy,  
Till the wide floors, where wrongful revellings are,  
Smoke with the gore of traitors, who thy substance mar.

## 51

"Now will I make thee strange in all men's sight,  
 Parch up the fair flesh on each flexile limb,  
 Cause thy loose auburn locks to vanish quite,  
 Thy beard befoul, and make thy features grim,  
 And for vile rags exchange thy raiment trim,  
 Loathed of the suitors when they look thereon,  
 And blear thy beauteous eyes and make them dim,  
 Unlovely even to thy wife and son,  
 Whom thou a little child didst leave in years long gone.

## 52

"Thou first the swineherd, guardian of thy swine,  
 One poor, yet proven in fidelity,  
 Seek : a good heart he holds toward thee and thine,  
 True to thy child and sage Penelope.  
 Him in the dale reclining thou shalt see  
 Near Corax rock and Arethusa spring.  
 Thither the gross herds troop, and ravenously  
 Champ the crisp acorns, and find watering,  
 Whence the fat sides of swine their daily increase bring.

## 53

"There wait and ask him all things. I anon  
 To bride-famed Sparta will go hence, to call  
 Telemachus, thy well-belovèd son,  
 Who went of late to Menelaus' hall  
 To hear some tidings of thy life or fall."  
 Then wary-wise Odysseus answering said :  
 "Why didst thou spare to tell him, knowing all ?  
 Wast fain to drive him, whelmed with anguish dread,  
 Wide o'er the barren seas, while strangers eat his bread ?"

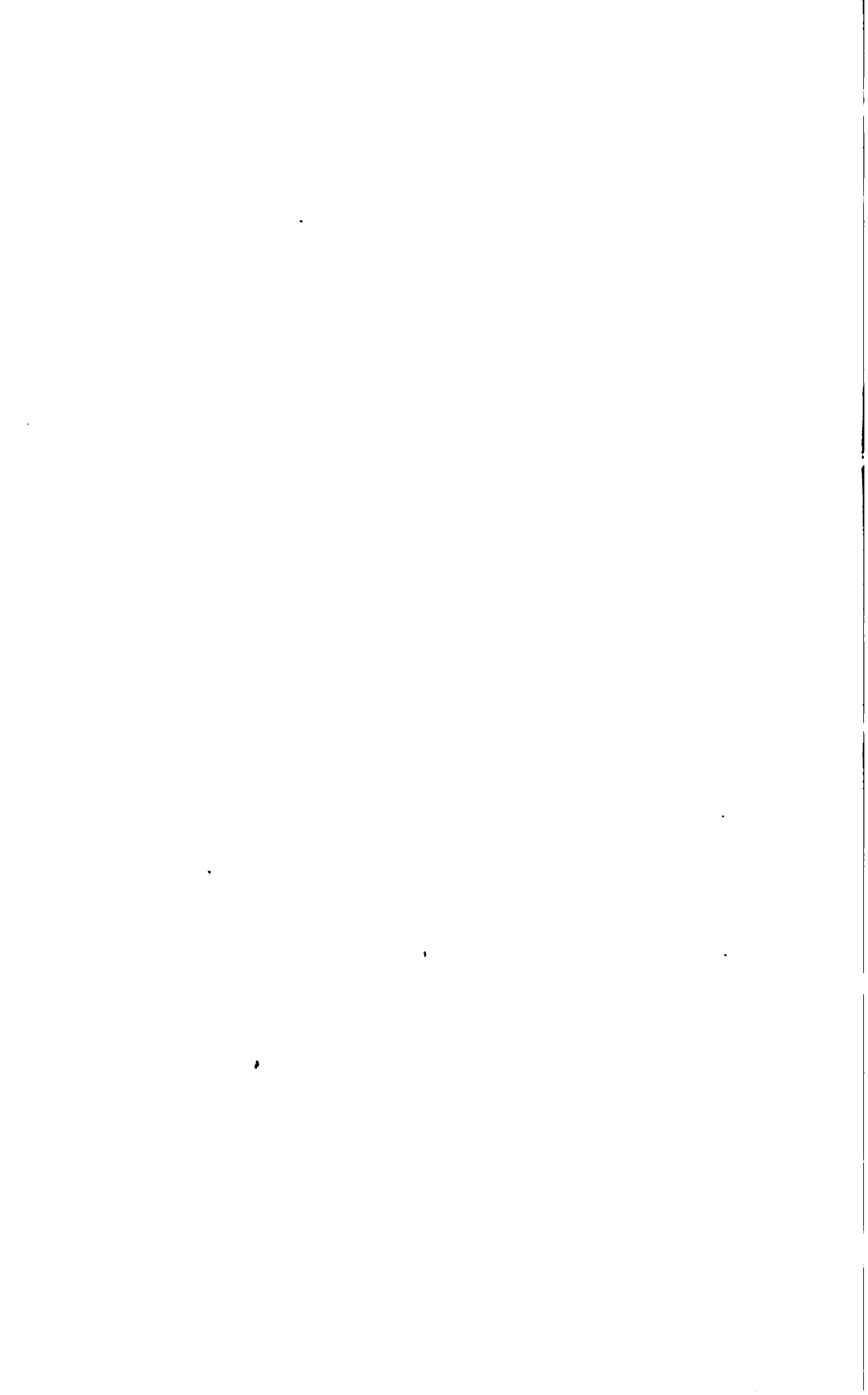
## 54

Whereto the stern-eyed goddess made reply :  
“ Vex not for him thy soul ! *I* sent him hence  
To build him a great name that shall not die.  
There doth he find nor labour nor offence.  
Atrides in serene magnificence  
Kindly entreats him. But young men there are  
Who lurk e'en now to slay him sailing thence.  
Yet, if I err not, first shall Earth embar  
Deep in her womb those shameless, who thy substance mar.”

## 55

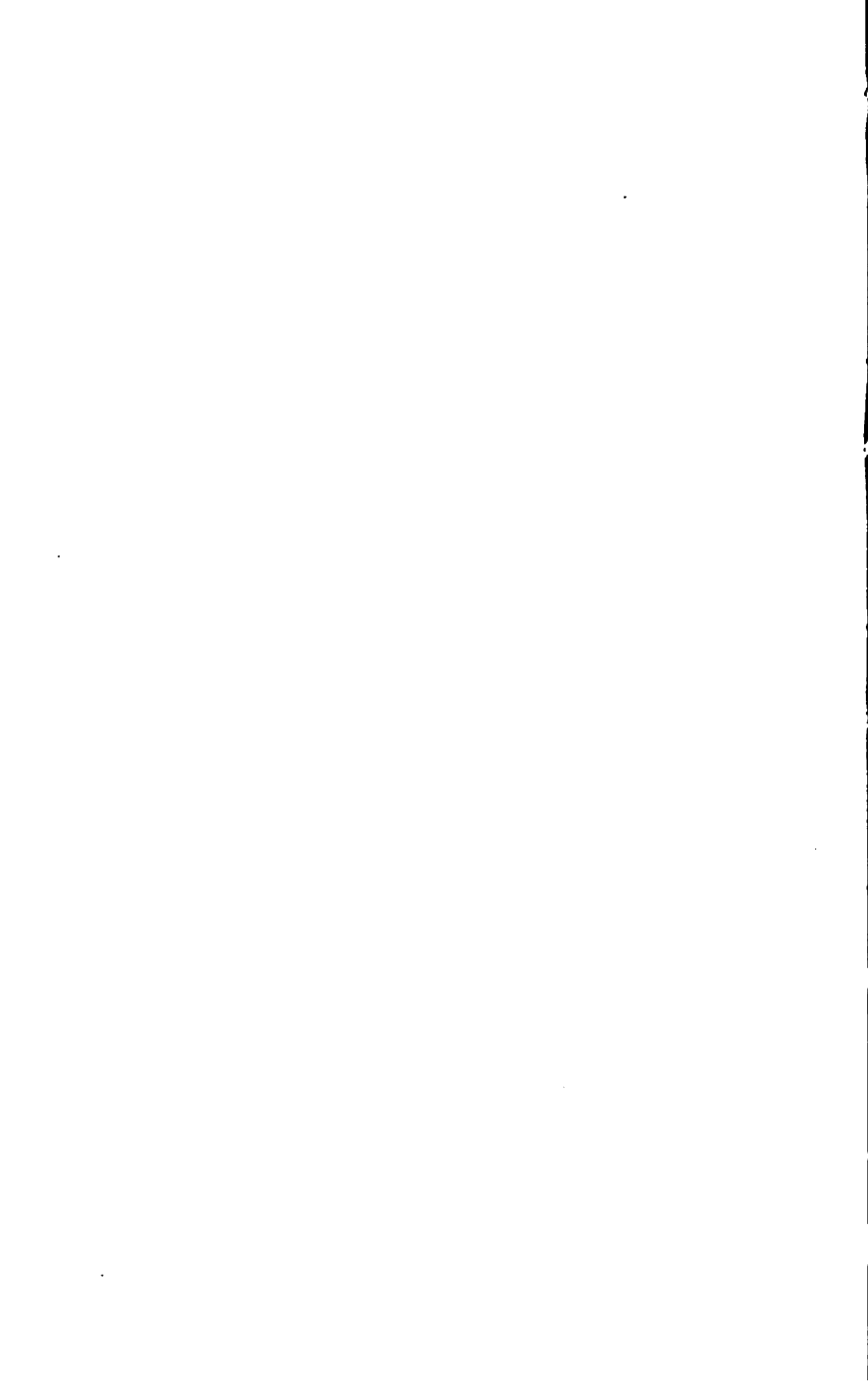
So with her wand she touched him ; and the skin  
Shrunk on the flexile limbs, the auburn hair  
Died, and he stooped an old man, wrinkled, thin.  
Bleared were the bright orbs, late so wondrous fair ;  
And coarse rags, smoke-defiled, she made him wear,  
Wrapt with vile deer's-hide, and rude staff anon  
Gave, and a foul scrip leathern-looped to bear.  
Thus the twain parted, after counsels done,  
And she, the goddess, passed to Sparta for his son.





**B O O K X I V .**

**ODYSSEUS IS ENTERTAINED BY THE SWINEHERD EUMÆUS.**



## BOOK XIV.

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### 1

HE through the woods, the hillside path along,  
Went to the noble swineherd, who, of all  
His servants, guarded most his wealth from wrong.  
Him found he sitting where conspicuous, tall,  
And large and beauteous ran the courtyard wall,  
Which for his absent master's swine (unknown  
To old Laertes and the queen withal),  
Paled with black stakes, cut from the copse, of stone  
The swineherd built, with bushes round the coping sown.

### 2

Within, twelve styes, the beds of swine, he made.  
In each were fifty female breeders pent.  
But in the outer space the males were stayed,  
Much fewer: day by day their choicest went  
To feed the godlike suitors, while they spent  
Wealth countless. Threescore and three hundred then  
Remained—these only to their feasts unspent.  
Four watchdogs sentinel both wall and pen,  
Like to wild beasts, whom bred the swineherd, chief of men.

## 3

There he at work upon his wonted seat  
 Framed sandals, and of ox the shining hide  
 Cut, deftly shaping it about his feet.  
 Three of his men, the gathering swine to guide,  
 Had gone their several ways, and busily plied  
 Each his own task. The fourth with a fat boar,  
 (Doomed by severe compulsion to provide  
 Still for the suitors from his master's store  
 Some victim) to the city he had sent before.

## 4

Sudden the clamorous dogs Odysseus eye,  
 And with quick howl run forward. He anon  
 Stooped to the earth, and crouched down craftily,  
 And his staff dropt: yet even there full soon  
 Had he dire grief at his own homestead won,  
 But from the door the swineherd hurrying  
 Let fall the leather, and with shout and stone  
 Drave off the dogs, and thus addressed his king:  
 "Little it lacked, old man, that thou on me shouldst bring

## 5

"Shame and reproach, thus torn near to my door,  
 Whom without this the gods of woe full meed  
 Have given; since I here sit bemoaning sore  
 My noble master, and his fat swine feed  
 For others. He, it may be, suffers need  
 Far on a foreign soil, and sad doth roam,  
 If haply he yet live, yet feel indeed  
 The sunlight—but, old man, behold my home!  
 Taste food and wine; then tell whence grieving thou art  
 come."

## 6

Forthwith the noble swineherd led the way  
Into his hut, and made the old man sit.  
Piling the brushwood which around him lay,  
Hide of a wild goat he spread over it,  
Shaggy and large and warm, for sleepers fit,  
His own couch ; and Odysseus, glad to find  
Such welcome, him with wingèd words requit :  
“ Zeus and all gods, for this, whate’er thy mind  
Most loves to thee vouchsafe, who hast a heart so kind !”

## 7

Swineherd Eumæus, then didst thou reply :  
“ O friend, I dare not, though a worse man sought  
These doors, a stranger use discourteously.  
All strangers and all poor by Zeus are brought ;  
Sweet is our gift, yet small ; since not for nought  
The servants tremble when young men bear sway.  
But one there is, for ever in my thought,  
Whom the gods hinder and keep far away,  
Who from his heart would love me, were he here this day.

## 8

“ Wealth would he give, house, field, and a dear wife—  
Such kindness as good masters deign to show,  
When reaps the labour of a loyal life  
Such increase as the gods on mine bestow.  
Ah me ! but he hath fallen long ago ;  
As would that Helen and all her race outright,  
Hurled to their knees, were fall’n ! for she brought low  
The knees of many ; and he too went to fight  
For Agamemnon’s name to Ilion’s castled height.”

## 9

He then, his tunic quickly girding, passed  
 Forth to the styres wherein the swine were pent.  
 Twain he selected, and with diligent haste [sprent,  
 Killed, singed, and carved them ; then, with white flour  
 Did to Odysseus the choice parts present,  
 Hot, bubbling on the spits, just as they were ;  
 And in an ivy cup with care intent  
 Mingled sweet wine ; which done, he made repair  
 Unto a seat hard by, and cheered him to the fare :

## 10

“ Now then, O stranger, take thou heart and eat  
 What servants have to offer—swine like these.  
 The prime ones of our herd still furnish meat  
 For the proud suitors in their revelries.  
 They in the palace, with their souls at ease,  
 Feast, not considering revenge to come,  
 And know not mercy. But such works displease  
 The blessèd gods, who, wielding sovran doom,  
 Love justice on the earth, and give the righteous room.

## 11

“ Yea, foes and fierce men, when they spoil a land,  
 If Zeus vouchsafe them plunder, with their store  
 Sail home. Thus even the bloody pirate-band  
 Thinks of revenge to come. But evermore  
 These ply their crime within my master's door.  
 Something they know, some god has told it them—  
 His death. For this doth outrage stain his floor.  
 Shame on their suit who every law contemn !  
 Lightly they rend and revel ; no power the flood can stem.

## 12

“ For, every night and day that comes from Zeus,  
No more one victim do they kill, nor two.  
They in the king’s halls waste the vine’s red juice,  
Draining it past belief. For, I speak true,  
His was a very noble revenue.  
None of the mainland-heroes, now nor then,  
None here in Ithaca, like produce grew.  
No, not the whole wealth of a score of men  
Could match with half he holds in house and mount and glen.

## 13

“ Hear now the catalogue. Twelve herds of kine  
Feed on the dark mainland, twelve flocks of sheep,  
Of goats an equal tale, twelve droves of swine.  
All these his friends and his own herdmen keep.  
Here flocks eleven of goats beside the deep  
Browse, guarded by good men. But each must make  
Choice from his charge, and drive one from the steep  
Daily, to perish for the suitors’ sake.  
I guard these swine—but ever they my choicest take.”

## 14

Thus he made speech. The stranger ravenously  
Ate flesh and drank wine, answering not a word,  
And for the suitors nursed revenge. But he  
Poured wine, and on his guest the cup conferred,  
Brimful. Deep joy within Odysseus stirred,  
And in winged words he spake: “ O friend, now tell  
Who was this lord, so mighty, rich, revered,  
That bought you with his wealth? You say he fell  
For Agamemnon’s name, by Troia’s citadel.



## 15

“ It may be I have met with such a man :  
Zeus only knows, and all the gods in heaven :  
So will I tell thee tidings, if I can,  
Since very far and wide have I been driven.”  
Then said the swineherd : “ It were vainly striven,  
Old man, with news to cheer his wife and child.  
Oft needy wandering men, to fraud much given,  
Have for a lodging many lies compiled.  
These far too much already have my dear queen beguiled.

## 16

“ Such she treats tenderly, enquiring all,  
And in heart-bitterness doth weep and wail,  
As wife should, when her lord far off doth fall.  
Thou too, old man, wouldst quickly forge some tale.  
But as for him, long since his life did fail ;  
Dogs must have torn him, and wild birds of prey ;  
Or, as the dead form drifted with the gale,  
Fishes devoured him, and his bones this day,  
Wrapt in the cold sea-sand, lie mouldering far away.

## 17

“ Thus all his friends feel sorrow, but I most,  
Who nevermore can find beneath the sun  
Heart mild as of the master I have lost,  
What land soever I set foot upon ;  
Ah me ! not even though again I won  
Home of my father and my mother dear,  
In the old country, where my life begun,  
And where they nourished me from year to year  
A little child, far off, beyond the rolling mere.

## 18

“Truly for these I hoard a deep regret,  
These too remember with exceeding pain,  
And with my whole heart yearn and yearn to set  
Print of my feet on that dear earth again ;  
But for Odysseus on my soul hath lain  
Chief sorrow ; nor, O stranger, can I bear  
Lightly upon these lips to entertain  
His name, who loved me with such kindly care,  
Whom to an elder brother I, though lost, compare.”

## 19

He ending, answered the much-suffering chief :  
“Friend, since thou dost deny this utterly,  
Hopeless of heart and stern in unbelief,  
Not lightly, but with oath I certify—  
Odysseus comes. That day shalt thou supply  
Fair raiment, meed of the good news I tell.  
Till then let me abide in penury ;  
Since to me hateful as the doors of hell  
That man, to whom mere want can make a lie seem well.

## 20

“First of the gods bear witness Zeus the while,  
Thy table kind, that hearth which I have found,  
Hearth of the brave Odysseus void of guile,  
This word with due fulfilment shall be crowned !  
While yet the wheel of this same year goes round,  
As one month wanes, and as the next comes in,  
Odysseus shall return to his own ground,  
And in the palace, where the suitors sin  
Against his wife and child, full vengeance shall begin.”

## 21

Swineherd Eumæus, then didst thou reply ;  
“ Old man, I know that I shall never see  
Any fulfilment of this prophecy ;  
No guerdon of good news shall I give thee ;  
No more to Ithaca returneth he.  
Drink here at ease, and talk of other things,  
Nor urge these woes upon my memory ;  
Since always in my heart much grief there springs,  
Oft as one nameth him, my lord, the best of kings.

## 22

“ But let the oath pass. May Odysseus thus  
Come back, as I wish, and Penelope,  
And old Laertes, and Telemachus  
His son ! whom I now mourn unceasingly,  
Odysseus' son, who like a tender tree  
Waxed under the sweet heaven both fair and tall.  
Gods were his nursing-fathers. Seemed that he  
Should not a whit behind his father fall  
In beauty and good heart, among the heroes all.

## 23

“ But now of mortals or immortals one  
Hath warped within his breast the even mind ;  
And he to Pylos the divine hath gone,  
If chance some tidings of his sire he find.  
Meanwhile the suitors have his death designed,  
And in the homeward way that he must pass  
Lurk, that no rumour may be left behind,  
No echo of the glory that once was,  
When they the race root out of old Arkeisias.

## 24

“ But let this pass. It may be he will die ;  
It may be that Kronion will uphold  
His life with power, and lend him help to fly.  
But come, old man, thine own sad griefs unfold,  
And of a truth, I pray, let this be told :  
Whence art thou, of what parents, from what strand,  
On what ship camest o’er the watery wold  
To Ithaca ? what men the vessel manned ?  
Since sure am I thou never camest here by land.”

## 25

And wary-wise Odysseus answering said :  
“ Now my whole story will I tell thee true.  
Yet if, within these doors, good store of bread  
And sweet wine were provided for us two,  
To feast, while other men their labours do,  
Easily could I spend a whole year’s space  
In telling of the toils I have gone through,  
And the long woes which the celestial race  
Pour on my life, and roamings far from place to place.

## 26

“ Of wide Crete are the loins from which I come,  
Child of a rich man, and with many more  
Bred and begotten in my father’s home,  
Sons of his wife : me a bought mistress bore.  
But he of household honour equal store,  
Castor Hylacides, whose seed I claim,  
Gave me, nor lineal offspring ranked before  
Fruit of his mistress. Like a god’s his fame  
Rang through wide Crete for wealth and sons of noble name.

## 27

"But him the Fates of death to Hades bore.  
 Then speedily did his sons by lot divide  
 His substance, and to me but a poor store  
 Gave, and a mean house, in their high-flown pride.  
 Yet through my manly virtue a rich bride  
 I won, being neither vain, nor profitless,  
 Nor craven in war. Now all these things have died ;  
 Yet from the very stubble thine eye can guess  
 That which once was, ere yet I knew such dire distress.

## 28

"For in my strong breast such a soul of fire,  
 Man-breaking power to whelm a host of foes,  
 Both Ares and Athene did inspire.  
 Yea, when our bravest I for ambush chose,  
 Never I ween in my great heart arose  
 Bodings of death, nor any fear of ill.  
 I on all foemen, ever the first to close,  
 Leapt ; and whatever failed of feet, that still  
 I with the sword smote down, and shed the life at will.

## 29

"Such was I seen in arms, but held not dear  
 Thrift in the house and labour of the hand,  
 Which things are wont a splendid race to rear.  
 Arrows and bows I loved, and fleets well manned,  
 Spears, and a noise of fightings in the land.  
 All that seems hateful and uncouth to men  
 God taught my eager spirit to understand.  
 Such wild delight I drank in warfare then !  
 Thus divers works, I ween, give joy to divers men.

## 30

“ Ere yet the sons of the Achaians came  
Warring from Argos, and on Troy set feet,  
Nine times to nations of another name  
Soldiers I led and a sea-furrowing fleet.  
Thus, when I gained large spoil exceeding sweet,  
I from the best made choice, much also won  
By lot. Full soon my house waxed great in Crete,  
And, for the glory of the exploits done,  
Dreadly-revered my name rang loud beneath the sun.

## 31

“ But when the sad way was ordained of Zeus  
Which loosed the knees of many a hero bold,  
They bade me lead with famed Idomeneus  
Ships to far Troy; nor dared we ought withhold,  
Or shrink back, by the general voice controlled.  
So for nine years we battled day by day,  
And in the tenth the towers of Priam rolled  
Low in the dust. But, when we sailed away,  
God in the stormy deep the Achaians drave astray.

## 32

“ Ah me! the mind of Zeus against my life  
From that day forward was revolving ill.  
Space of one month rejoicing with my wife,  
Children, and wealth, did I in Crete fulfil,  
And then within my breast the wayward will  
Impelled me, captain of a godlike band,  
With fair-appointed fleet to sail, until  
We in our course attain to Egypt land.  
Nine ships I fitted forth; good sailors came to hand.

## 33

“ All now prepared, six days from toil we ceased.  
Victims for sacrifice divine I gave,  
And victims many for the glorious feast.  
On the sev'nth day with my companions brave,  
Embarking from wide Crete, the main I clave  
Swift—for the great North-wind, high-breathing, fair,  
As down a seaward stream our vessel drive.  
We sitting without sickness, harm, or care,  
Fly with the help of steersmen and a prosperous air.

## 34

“ Ægyptus stream we reach on the fifth day.  
In the fair-flowing river the fleet I moor,  
Nor suffer my companions thence to stray,  
But charge them keep close sentry on the shore,  
While some go forth and from the heights explore  
The country. These to their own lusts give rein,  
And, yielding to the fire within them, pour  
Bale on the homesteads, and lay waste the plain,  
Take wives and children captive, and the men leave slain.

## 35

“ Soon in the city a wild cry was heard ;  
And footmen, chariots, and a glint of steel,  
Filled the wide champaign when the Dawn appeared.  
Then from the onset of their fiery zeal  
Zeus, lord of thunder, made our warriors reel ;  
Hemmed in with evil, through the plain they fled,  
And the foe following did fierce vengeance deal.  
Most by the sword fell ; some were captive led,  
Doomed in despite to labour and eat servile bread.

## 36

“ But Zeus himself—ah ! had I but died there  
In Egypt, such great sorrow was yet to spring !—  
Gave counsel to cast off my helmet fair,  
Drop the vain javelin, from my shoulders fling  
The shield, and in the front before their king  
To crouch, half-trampled by the steeds, and crave  
Help. To his knees with suppliant kiss I cling.  
He with a pitying heart salvation gave,  
And on the chariot-board me weeping homeward drave.

## 37

“ Many with spears, such fiery impulse held  
Their spirits, rushed upon me, fierce to kill.  
He with his single arm their rage repelled,  
And my deliverance wrought, remembering still  
Zeus, guard of suppliants, who doth aye fulfil  
Sentence against the sinner, whoe'er he be,  
And in the lofty heaven takes count of ill.  
There did I reap his hospitality  
Seven years, and won much wealth, for all men gave to me.

## 38

“ But when the eighth year was at hand, lo, then  
Came a Phœnician, nursing fraud in heart,  
Grasper of base gain, dealing wrongs to men ;  
Who straight beguiled me through his treacherous art  
With him to his own country to depart,  
Phœnice. Thus I, yielding to deceit,  
Leave Egypt land, and on the voyage start,  
And sail to his estate and native seat.  
There with him in his house I stayed a year complete.



## 39

“ Scheming to sell me, and much wealth to get,  
But framing lies about my share in trade,  
Me then for Libya he on shipboard set,  
Forced in despite to follow, though sore afraid.  
We with the eager-spirited North-wind made  
Crete, and soon left the island in our lee.  
But Zeus against them evil counsels laid.  
Onward the swift keel through the waves did flee,  
Till now no land appeared, but only skies and sea.

## 40

“ Then did Kronion o'er the hollow bark  
Hang forth a black cloud, and the quick gloom stole  
O'er the wide seas. He mid the lowering dark  
Made his loud thunder-peals in tumult roll,  
And rived the ship with lightnings from the pole.  
While in the blazing volley of Zeus she reeled,  
Filled with red fire and smoke of sulphurous coal,  
Men in the waves like sea-gulls shone revealed,  
Till their returnless eyes the god for ever sealed.

## 41

“ But Zeus himself, in pity of my pain,  
Placed in my arms the huge mast. Firm I cling,  
Rolled round it, nine days, mid the furious main.  
Me on the tenth night a great wave did fling  
On land of the Thesprotians, whose brave king,  
Pheidon, with free love helped me; for his son  
Found me, and raised me up just perishing,  
And led me to his father, sore undone,  
And gave me food and drink, and raiment to put on.

## 42

“There of the brave Odysseus I heard tell.  
Yea, the king told me how some while before  
Himself had entertained and loved him well,  
Then on the voyage to his native shore.  
Brass, gold, wrought steel, and countless treasures more  
He showed me, whence a plain man wealth might reap  
To the tenth generation—such vast store,  
Won by Odysseus, there in many a heap  
Ranged in the royal chambers, he, the king, did keep.

## 43

“Of him he spake as to Dodona gone,  
By word of Zeus from that great oak to hear  
How on his land set foot, how claim his own,  
By stealth or strength, now absent many a year.  
And in his house to me the king did swear,  
Pouring libations, that both bark and men  
Were ready, to his home thy lord to bear.  
But me he sent first. Chanced that even then  
Ship sailed to rich Dulichium with Thesprotian men.

## 44

“Thither he bade them take me on with love  
To king Acastus. They within their mind  
Planned a dire counsel, that I yet might prove  
Anguish extreme. For, when we left behind  
Thesprotian earth, those wolfish men designed  
To sell me to the servile life for pay.  
Soon of my robes they strip me bare, and wind  
Vile rags about me, rent with foul decay.  
These are the very same—you see them here to-day.

## 45

"At eve the fields of Ithaca they reach.  
 Me on the well-benched vessel, strongly bound,  
 They leave, and snatch their meal upon the beach.  
 But to my help the gods themselves unwound  
 My cords with ease, though firmly twisted round.  
 I, with these weeds close muffling up my head,  
 Slide down the rudder, dive without a sound.  
 And, the waves breasting, stealthy hands outspread,  
 Oaring myself aloof. Thus quickly far I fled.

## 46

"Soon, where a flowering copse the shore did crown,  
 Emerging from the waves in shade I lay  
 Crouched, while the men searched busily up and down,  
 Groaning for wrath. Nor did they long delay,  
 Urging the bootless quest, but sailed away.  
 Thus me with ease the gods themselves concealed,  
 Nor, though in strange land, set my feet astray,  
 But led me to a good man's house and field.  
 Thus, yet a little longer, Fate my life doth shield."

## 47

Swineherd Eumæus, thou didst answer make :  
 "O poor lost stranger, for thy tale of pain,  
 Thy wanderings and thy woes, my heart doth ache.  
 Yet something hast thou told in no wise strain.  
 All is not well. The tidings thou dost feign  
 About Odysseus shall no credence earn.  
 Why should a man like thee tell lies in vain ?  
 Little concerning *him* is left to learn.  
 All gods their faces set against my lord's return.

## 48

“They would not let him mid the Trojans fall,  
Nor in his friends’ arms, when the war was done,  
That so the full host of Achaians all  
Might build his tomb, when he for aye had won  
Guerdon of loftiest glory for his son.  
But now those limbs ingloriously are rent  
By Harpies, and unheard-of he is gone.  
*My* days forlorn among the swine are spent,  
Nor to the peopled town my steps are ever bent,

## 49

“Save when the queen, if she some tidings hear,  
Sends for me. Then they all make urgent quest,  
Both those who mourn for my lost master dear,  
And those who spoil him, and his house infest  
Unpunished. As for me, within my breast  
No tale I care for, and no rumour scan,  
Since the sad hour that an Ætolian guest,  
One that roamed far through having slain a man,  
Did, for my warm love given, a treacherous story plan.

## 50

“He told me he had seen my lord in Crete,  
Guest of Idomeneus, from storms at sea  
Waiting in shelter to repair his fleet;  
And that in summer or in autumn he,  
With large wealth and a godlike company,  
Should reach home. Spare, old man, whom God doth make  
Guest of my hearth, this well-meant flattery.  
Not for these things shalt thou my love partake,  
But for the fear of Zeus, and for thy sorrows’ sake.”

## 51

And wary-wise Odysseus answering said :  
“ Heart very hard of faith beats in thy breast ;  
No word can win thee and no oath persuade.  
Come, strike a league, and let us call the blest  
To witness, all who in Olympus rest—  
If to this house thy king return indeed,  
Then shalt thou give me a fair robe and vest,  
And send me to Dulichium void of need,  
Whither my soul is set, whither my feet would speed.

## 52

“ But if thy king return not as I say,  
Then bid the servants hurl me from yon steep,  
That other poor offend not in like way.”  
Then said the noble swineherd : “ A great heap  
Of glory for all time shall I then reap,  
O stranger, if, when I have led thee in  
And loved thee, from the earth thy life I sweep.  
Lightly my prayers the ear of Zeus should win.  
Come, eat! Soon will the men their evening meal begin.”

## 53

Thus held Odysseus and his host divine  
Their converse. From the fields each herdsman then  
Came ; and a sound unutterable of swine  
Clanged, as in lairs the several tribes they pen.  
Then said the noble swineherd to his men :  
“ Bring for our guest the best of swine, to kill  
We too will cheer our spirits once agen,  
Who all too long our weary tasks fulfil  
With sorrow, while bad men our labours eat at will.”

## 54

Thus having spoken, he with steel cleft wood.  
Soon on the hearthstone of the hut they set  
A large fat five-year-old. Nor did the good  
Swineherd the service of the gods forget,  
Nor fail to render all and each their debt.  
But first the forelock in the fire he cast,  
With prayer that wise Odysseus even yet  
Might come home ; and with oaken splint at last  
The swine smote on the hearthstone, and the life fled fast.

## 55

They then the knife implunge, and singe the hair  
With fire, and quickly the warm flesh divide,  
While, slicing the fat limbs, the swineherd there  
Round the raw layers of meat the caul implied ;  
Which, sprinkled with white flour, he placed aside  
And burned with fire. Then, duly cut, the rest  
With spits they pierce, and the choice food provide,  
And pile upon the board the feast well drest.  
The swineherd rose to carve : all justice he knew best.

## 56

He in seven shares did all the flesh divide.  
One for the Nymphs and Hermes, son divine  
Of Maia, with due prayer he placed aside ;  
Then to each comrade did with care assign  
Fit portion ; to Odysseus the whole chine,  
Gracing his guest. And thus spake forth the king,  
Pleased with his portion of the white-toothed swine :  
“ Zeus hold thee dear, Eumæus, for this thing,  
Who to one poor like me such goodly grace dost bring !”

## 57

Swineherd Eumæus, then didst thou reply :  
 “ Good stranger, eat ! and Heaven’s all-ruling lord  
 Will, as he list, this grant and that deny.”  
 He then the gods served, and the dark wine poured,  
 And to his king, now seated at the board,  
 The cup gave, and Mesaulius bread purveyed ;  
 Whom the good swineherd of his own accord  
 Bought with the earnings of his private trade.  
 From Taphian men seafaring he the purchase made.

## 58

They on the feast lay hands. But when desire  
 Had ceased, Mesaulius cleared the board, and all,  
 Filled with the corn and flesh, to bed retire.  
 Down came the dark Night in her moonless pall,  
 While Zeus from heaven eternal rain let fall,  
 And blew the drenching Zephyrus without end.  
 Then did Odysseus to the swineherd call,  
 His kind love testing, if he deign to lend  
 Haply his own warm covering, or persuade a friend :

## 59

“ Hear now, Eumæus, and thy comrades all !  
 I speak for glory, since by wine made bold  
 Often to singing even the wise will fall,  
 Light laughter and the dance, nor can withhold  
 Words that in sooth were better far untold—  
 Yet, fairly launched, I swerve not. Would to-night  
 Such were my strength as in the days of old,  
 When, mid the sufferings of the ten years’ fight,  
 Once we lay crouched in ambush under Troia’s height !

## 60

“ Atrides Menelaus held command,  
Odysseus, and I third ; such was their will.  
Close to the city's walls we ranged our band,  
Armed, in the marsh-reeds cowering, mute and still.  
Down came the bad Night, and cut piercing chill  
With ice-winds from the north. The snow like rime  
Glazed on the shields, which the keen frost did frill.  
There, couched beneath their shields, in that fell clime  
Wrapt in warm cloaks the rest slept soundly all the time.

## 61

“ I, like a fool, had left my cloak behind,  
Not dreaming it would freeze. Doublet and shield  
Alone now fenced me from the wintry wind.  
But in the third watch, when the stars had wheeled,  
I nudged Odysseus, and his sleep unsealed,  
And spake : ‘ Odysseus, wise Laértiades,  
Guile of some god hath lured me to this field  
Cloakless ; remaineth nor escape nor ease ;  
Soon shall I leave the living, so direly doth it freeze.’

## 62

“ Thus spake I : soon did his shrewd sense appear :  
Such was he ever both to scheme and fight.  
Softly he whispered : ‘ Hush, lest some one hear !’  
And, on his elbow leaning to the right,  
Spake to his fellows : ‘ Hark, my friends ! this night  
A dream from heaven hath sought me in my sleep.  
Far lie the ships. Go some one, and incite  
Atrides Agamemnon, who doth keep  
Our host, to send more soldiers inland from the deep.’



## 63

“ He spake ; and quickly rose Andræmon’s son,  
 Thoas, and leaving there his purple cloak  
 Swift in the chill night to the ships did run.  
 I in his garment slumbered warm, till broke  
 The golden-thronèd morning ; then I woke.  
 O were my strength firm as in years of old,  
 One of the swineherds would soon lend a cloak  
 For friendship, reverencing a warrior bold !  
 Now am I scorned, because vile rags my form enfold.”

## 64

Swineherd Eumæus, thou didst answer make :  
 “ Old man, well said ! thy words have all been good ;  
 And thou shalt fairly of our robes partake,  
 Yea find all comfort that a suppliant should,  
 Now—in the morning thine own raiment rude  
 Must serve thy turn : few changes keep we here :  
 Each hath his own one suit, not oft renewed.  
 But, when my lord’s son comes, robes and good cheer  
 He will vouchsafe, and send thee whither thou list to fare.”

## 65

This said, he rose up, and beside the fire  
 Spread forth a couch with skins of goats and sheep.  
 There lay Odysseus, wrapt in warm attire,  
 Which the good swineherd for a change did keep,  
 Whenso from heaven a furious storm might sweep.  
 There lay Odysseus, and beside him slept  
 The young men ; but the swineherd would not sleep  
 Far from his swine, but from the doors forth stept,  
 Armed and accoutred well, such faithful charge he kept.

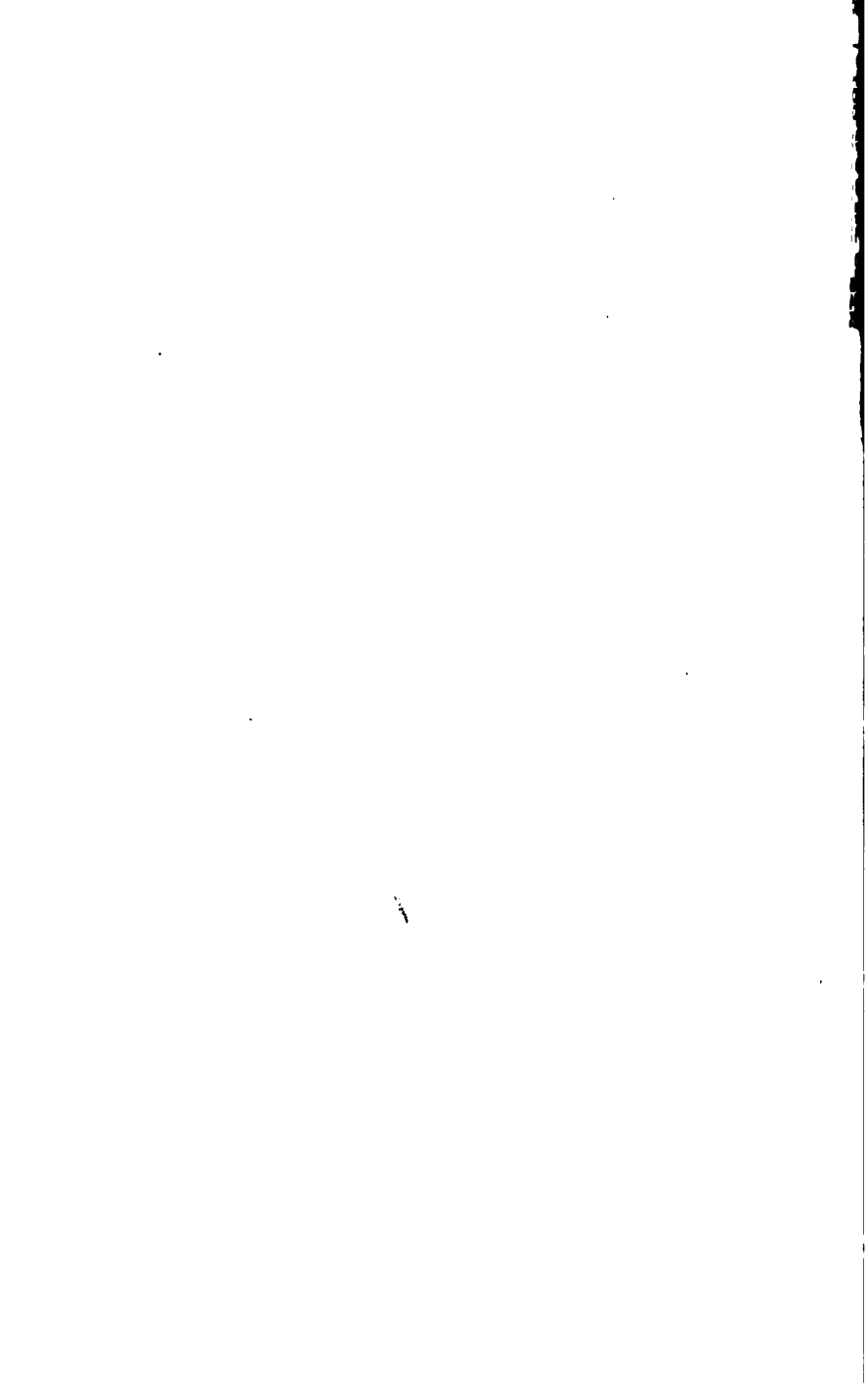
## 66

Glad was Odysseus that so much he cared  
His master to serve well, though far away.  
With sword flung o'er his shoulders forth he fared,  
Adjusting the good cloak which round him lay,  
Proof to all winds, a very warm array ;  
Then took the hide of a great goat well fed,  
And spear, both dogs and men to keep at bay.  
So mid the swine, where arched rocks overhead  
Fenced off the Boreal blast, the swineherd sought his bed.



## BOOK XV.

TELEMACHUS, WITH THEOCLYMENUS THE SEER, RETURNS  
TO ITHACA—THE STORY OF EUMÆUS.



## BOOK XV.

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### 1

To spacious Lacedæmon went meanwhile  
Athene, there to urge Odysseus' son  
With memory of return to his own isle.  
There she Telemachus and Nestor's son  
Couched in the corridor found sleeping,—one  
Asleep, the child of Nestor,—but sweet rest  
To eyelids of Telemachus came none ;  
He through ambrosial night lay sore distressed,  
Such care for his dear father filled his wakeful breast.

### 2

Stern-eyed Athene standing near him spake :  
“Telemachus, no longer seems it well  
To wander far away, while spoilers take  
Thy treasures. Up, lest these destroyers fell  
Eat all thy goods between them, while men tell  
How on a bootless journey thou didst go.  
Thou with persuasion thy brave host impel  
To send thee quickly o'er the seas, that so  
Thou find thy blameless mother yet at home. For know,

## 3

“ Father and brothers her e'en now incite  
Eurymachus to marry. He as yet  
Outbids them all. Watch, lest in thy despite  
Some fair possession from thy home he get :  
Since, well thou knowest, a woman's soul is set  
His house to prosper whom she chance to wed.  
Linked to another she discards all debt  
Due to the children of her former bed,  
Nor thinks at all of him, her dear-loved husband dead.

## 4

“ Now homeward, and to her thy house confide  
Whom of thy household thou dost worthiest rate,  
Till the gods show thee an illustrious bride.  
Hear too this word, this hearken, ere too late :  
"Twixt Ithaca and Samos in the strait,  
Couched in convenient ambush men there are,  
Picked from the suitors, who to slay thee wait.  
Yet, if I err not, first shall Earth embar  
Deep in her womb those traitors, who thy substance mar.

## 5

“ Keep well clear of the islands, sail by night ;  
Thy guardian god shall give thee a good wind.  
But, soon as Ithaca stands fair in sight,  
Thrust toward the town thy vessel, and first find  
The swineherd, who doth guard with loyal mind  
Thy swine, and with a single heart serve thee.  
There sleep the night out, in his hut reclined ;  
Then send him to discreet Penelope  
To tell that safe from Pylos thou hast sailed the sea.”

## 6

This spoken, she to far Olympus went ;  
But he the son of Nestor from sweet sleep  
Stirred with his heel, and wingèd words forth sent :  
“ Wake, son of Nestor, from thy drowsings deep !  
Time is that reckoning of our road we keep.  
Up, yoke the whole-hoofed horses, and away !”  
Then spake the son of Nestor, roused from sleep :  
“ Twere vain, though sore desiring, to essay  
Through the dark night to drive ; but soon it will be day.

## 7

“ Wait then awhile, till we some gifts receive  
From hero Menelaus of warlike fame,  
And he with comfortable words take leave.  
For when a host with friendship void of blame  
Gives of his choicest, men observe his name,  
And hold it all their lives exceeding dear.”  
He spake, and golden-thronèd Morning came.  
Then Atreus' son, great wielder of the spear,  
From bright-haired Helen rose, and to his guests came near.

## 8

Whom when the dear son of Odysseus knew,  
He with the shining tunic out of hand  
His loins girt, and rich raiment fair to view  
Flung round his ample shoulders ; then did stand  
Near to the king, and spake what his heart planned :  
“ Atrides Menelaus, now right fain  
I yearn to go to my dear fatherland.  
Let me put homeward through the rolling main.”  
And warrior Menelaus answering spake again :



## 9

“I, dear Telemachus, am not the man  
To hold thee back long time, when fain to fly,  
Nor I myself such host with favour scan.  
Let us in all things the true mean apply ;  
Roughness offends, and over-courtesy.  
He to my mind an equal sin doth show  
Who, when a guest would linger, hints good-bye,  
And who, if one desire to part, says no.  
Love well the tarrying guest, and speed him fain to go.

## 10

“But wait awhile till gifts exceeding fair  
I bring, that thou may'st see them with thine eyes ;  
Wait, till the women in my halls prepare  
The morning meal ; for in my house there lies  
Store of all food for all festivities.  
Honour alike and profit still demand  
This ; and all mortals eat, if they be wise,  
Ere they a long far journey take in hand.  
But if with me thou list through Hellas and the land

## 11

“Of Argos to divert thy course, then stay  
Till I myself get ready and yoke for thee  
Steeds, and to peopled cities lead the way.  
We to all houses shall have entrance free,  
And leave none graceless and without good fee ;  
Each will give something very choice and fair,  
Either a brazen tripod or, may be,  
Caldron of price, or mules, a sturdy pair,  
Or goblet all of gold, enriched with chasings rare.”

## 12

To whom the sage Telemachus then spake :  
“ Atrides Menelaus, Zeus-born king,  
Fain would I now to mine own hearth go back ;  
For when to Pylos me my bark did bring,  
Guardless at home did I leave everything ;  
And at this moment is my soul in doubt  
Lest on my life some secret danger spring,  
While on my father's quest I roam about,  
Or from my halls perforce good treasure be taken out.”

## 13

This when the warrior Menelaus heard,  
Then he his wife and handmaids bade prepare  
Food in the halls—who straight attend his word.  
And Eteoneus to his lord came near,  
Fresh from his couch ; not far he dwelt ; whom there  
Quickly the warrior king bade kindle fire,  
And the meat dress. He to his lord gave ear ;  
Who then to cedarn chamber did retire  
With Helen. Megapenthes too went with his sire.

## 14

So when they came to where the treasures lay,  
Atrides took the double cup, and bade  
His son the silvern bowl to bear away.  
Also stood Helen, in sweet grace arrayed,  
Near the rich robes which she herself had made.  
One she took up, the largest and most fair,  
Which in the deep chest was the lowest laid,  
And glistening like a star. Then forth they fare.  
And thus outspake the hero of the golden hair :

## 15

“Telemachus, may Thunderer Zeus, great lord  
Of Hera, speed thee, and thy wish fulfil!  
Now, of all gifts which in the house lie stored,  
My choicest, (would that I had worthier still!)  
This bowl, I give thee, carved with curious skill,  
Hephæstus' work, all silver, rimmed with gold,  
Which Sidon's king once gave me in good will,  
Phædimus, courteous host and hero bold.  
Henceforth to thee pertains this gift of price untold.”

## 16

Thus spake the godlike warrior, Atreus' son,  
And in his hands the double cup did place.  
But the brave Megapenthes then set down  
That bowl of silver, gleaming with all grace,  
Hephæstus' work, which beauteous themes enchase :  
There in his full gaze did the wonder shine.  
Then came the gentle Helen, fair of face.  
She, holding in her hands the robe divine,  
Did to her guest rich raiment in these words consign :

## 17

“This too, dear child, this gift of mine, I pray,  
Memorial of the hands of Helen, bear!  
Keep it against thy much-loved marriage-day,  
Stored by thy mother, for thy wife to wear.  
Now, to my heart's dear wish, rejoicing fare  
Hence to thy home and country!” Thus she said;  
And he with joy received the raiment rare.  
Hero Pisistratus the gifts conveyed  
Admiring to the car, and each in order laid.

## 18

Forthwith the hero of the golden hair  
His steps before them to the palace bent,  
And ranged them in the hall on bench and chair.  
Then to each guest the busy handmaid went,  
And from a golden ewer, with chasings sprent,  
The lustral stream in silver basin poured,  
And the choice table spread with care intent ;  
Whereon the staid house-dame piling a hoard  
Of dainties grudgeless gave rich store to deck the board.

## 19

And ever Eteoneus did assign  
To each due portion, and carved well the meat,  
And valiant Megapenthes poured forth wine ;  
They all the while assail the banquet sweet.  
But when at last they made an end to eat,  
Telemachus and Nestor's son renowned  
First yoke the long-maned horses, fiery fleet,  
Then, climbing the rich car, with a great sound  
Drive from the porch together, and reach the outer ground.

## 20

Thither the noble host in his right hand  
In golden beaker did sweet wine convey,  
That with libations they might leave the land,  
And near the horses lingering in the way  
Spake greeting : " Fare ye well, dear youths, this day !  
And all these things, when ye in Pylos are,  
To Nestor shepherd of the people say.  
He like a father loved me, when afar  
We sons of the Achaians under Troy made war."

## 21

Whereto the sage Telemachus returned :  
 " Yea verily, Zeus-born king, the truth entire  
 Will we, whatever we have seen and learned,  
 Make known, according to thy full desire.  
 O that so surely having found my sire  
 In Ithaca, beyond the rolling sea,  
 While his dear lips my manner of life enquire,  
 I may declare that I come loved by thee,  
 Graced with memorial gifts, and all good things in fee!"

## 22

Thus while he spake the parting word, behold  
 A bird, an eagle, flying on the right!  
 He in his talons a great goose did hold,  
 Tame from the courtyard, heavy and silver-white.  
 So came he near them, and with vehement flight,  
 Both men and women following with loud call,  
 Sheer past the horses rushed off on the right.  
 Then did a deep admiring wonder fall,  
 And the warm heart beat gladly in the breasts of all.

## 23

And Nestor's son Pisistratus began :  
 " Atrides Menelaus, Zeus-born king,  
 Read now the riddle, if perchance thou can—  
 Did God, who this wild eagle on the wing  
 Sent, to us twain or thee the omen bring?"  
 And the beloved of Ares, when he heard,  
 Wavered in doubt of how to solve the thing.  
 But long-robed Helen first took up the word,  
 And in the midst thus spake the omen of the bird :

## 24

“ Harken and I will utter what this day  
The gods suggest and also may fulfil !  
Just as this eagle came from far away,  
Reared in the bleak rock, nursling of the hill,  
And in the stormy ravin of his wild will  
Seized on the white goose, delicately bred,  
So brave Odysseus, after countless ill,  
Comes from afar off, dealing vengeance dread,  
Or waits at home e'en now, to strike the suitors dead.”

## 25

So spake the long-robed Helen ; and the rest,  
Thrilled at the word, paused silent listening by.  
But her the sage Telemachus addressed :  
“ Now Zeus Kronion, first of powers on high,  
Great lord of Hera, Thunderer of the sky,  
Prosper the meaning which thy lips declare,  
And deal according to this prophecy !  
Then will I not forget thee even there,  
But, as to some divine one, pay thee vows and prayer.”

## 26

Then did he lash the horses, and they twain,  
Forth from the city gates adventuring,  
Flew onward with their whole heart to the plain.  
The yoke between them all day long they swing,  
Till earth is wrapt in cloudy covering.  
The travellers at the house of Diocles,  
Son of Orsilochus, at Pheræ bring  
Their journey to a pause, and there take ease  
Of sleep. He food provides and friendly courtesies.

27

But when the rosy-fingered Dawn came on,  
 They the steeds harness, and eftsoons again  
 In carven chariot from the porch are gone.  
 Then did he scourge the horses, and they twain  
 Went as with wings along the dusty plain,  
 Nor swerved a moment in their fiery flight,  
 Till, as they neared the margin of the main,  
 Telemachus, when Pylos came in sight,  
 Spake to the noble child of the Gerenian knight :

28

“ O son of Nestor, could I win thee now  
 This to fulfil which I am fain to say !  
 We mutually inherit, I and thou,  
 Our fathers' friendship from an ancient day ;  
 Also our years are equal, and this way,  
 Shared by us both, will each yet more endear  
 To other—drive not past the bark, I pray,  
 Lest in his house the old man keep me here  
 For kindness' sake, though sore I long to be elsewhere.”

29

So spake he, and the son of Nestor heard,  
 And in his mind debated how were best  
 That wish to prosper and fulfil the word,  
 And last this counsel seemed within his breast  
 More gainful : seaward he their course addressed  
 Turning the horses, and the presents fair,  
 Given by the son of Atreus to his guest,  
 Ranged in the aft ship, gold and raiment rare ;  
 Then cheered his friend to sail, and wingèd words spake  
 there :

## 30

“ Now, ere I reach home and the tidings tell,  
Haste, climb the bark and bid the seamen row ;  
For in my mind and soul I know right well  
The old man’s fire ; he will not let thee go.  
Himself will come to call thee, well I know,  
Nor in his wrath will he return alone.”

He, ceasing, let the long-maned horses go,  
And quick the mansion of his father won.

Telemachus meanwhile did urge his comrades on :

## 31

“ Up, comrades, set the tackling, haste on board !”  
So they right readily to his hest gave ear,  
And manned the benches. He with gifts adored  
Athene in the aft, and the whole gear  
Ordered aright. And lo ! a man came near,

Flying from Argos for a murder done,  
Child of a line of seers, himself a seer,  
Sprung from Melampus, who did erewhile wonne  
In Pylos rich with flocks, and did great lordship own.

## 32

He from his own home flying at the last,  
And Neleus, first of mortals, mighty-souled,  
To a new land, another people, passed.  
So Neleus all the while his wealth did hold  
By main force, till a full year’s orb had rolled.

But in the halls of Phylacus the seer,  
Chained, without hope lay suffering woes untold  
For Neleus’ daughter and the bale severe

Which the heart-blinding Fury doomed his soul to bear.



## 33

But he from death fled, and the lowing kine  
 To Pylos drave, and for the fell deed wrought  
 Laid a due price on Neleus, chief divine ;  
 Then to his brother's home the princess brought.  
 Himself the while horse-feeding Argos sought,  
 Long dwelt there, built a house of noble name,  
 And to the Argives his dominion taught ;  
 There also married ; of his loins there came  
 Antiphates and Mantius, chief in might and fame.

## 34

Antiphates begat Oicleus brave,  
 And he Amphiaras, stern to dare,  
 A mover of mankind. Fast to him clave  
 In all love Zeus who doth the Ægis bear,  
 With lord Apollo, and in ceaseless care  
 More than for others did his life uphold.  
 Nor came he to old age : but dying there,  
 In Thebè, through his false wife's lust for gold,  
 Alcmaeon left, and eke Amphilochns the bold.

## 35

Also from Mantius Polypheides came,  
 And Cleitus, whom for his great beauty's sake  
 Golden-throned Morning for her own did claim,  
 And to the home of the immortals take.  
 Then did Apollo Polypheides make  
 First of mankind, when Amphiaras died,  
 In seer-craft. He in Hyperesia spake  
 Counsels to all men, and did there abide  
 Since first from home he fled, and his great sire defied.

## 36

Now came his son near—Theoclymenus,  
Flying from Argos, having slain a man,  
And by the black ship found Telemachus  
Pouring the wine with prayer ; then forward ran  
And called him, and in wingèd words began :  
“ Friend, since I find thee sacrificing here,  
Me now thy suppliant with kind favour scan,  
And by the dread name whom thy lips revere,  
These rites, and thine own head, and thy companions dear,

## 37

“ I pray thee tell me this and tell me true,  
Who art thou ? where thy land ? thy parents where ?”  
And sage Telemachus gave answer due :  
“ Stranger, right truly will I this declare.  
From Ithaca I spring, and if yet were  
My father, then Odysseus were his name ;  
But death long since hath fallen to his share ;  
Therefore with comrades and black bark I came,  
Yearning to find some tidings of my father’s fame.”

## 38

Whom godlike Theoclymenus addressed :  
“ I too, for tribesman slain, my country fly.  
Large is the clan, and of large wealth possessed,  
In knight-famed Argos wields dominion high.  
Fearful of these, from the dark Fate I fly,  
Knowing that I must wander sea and land.  
Hear me thy suppliant, who for refuge cry !  
Save me on shipboard with thine own true band ;  
Since the avengers now are even hard at hand !”

## 39

Answered in turn the sage Telemachus :  
" Now God forbid that I with ruthless mind  
Thrust thee forth helpless ! thou shalt come with us.  
Such as we have to offer thou shalt find  
In Ithaca, true friendship, welcome kind."  
Then did he take the prophet's steely spear,  
And on the main deck the long shaft inclined,  
Embarked and sat beside the helm, and near,  
Even at his own right hand, he placed the noble seer.

## 40

Then did the men the shoreward lines undo ;  
Then did Telemachus his comrades cheer  
To set the tackling. With good hearts the crew  
Heard him, and soon made fast the goodly gear.  
Safe in his place the pinewood mast they rear,  
And brace the glittering sails on twisted hide.  
Their bark Athene through the billowy mere  
With rushing stormy-spirited breeze did guide.  
Onward the dark swift keel cut steadily through the tide.

## 41

Down by the dark cliffs where the fountains play,  
And Chalcis beautiful with streams, they sailed.  
Deep in the dim west sank the orb of day,  
And with the dusk shade earth and sea were veiled.  
Swerveless and strong the wind of Zeus prevailed.  
They through the night by glimmering Elis shot,  
And now the spiry-pointed islands hailed.  
Nor the brave prince the suitors' scheme forgot,  
Wrung with dire doubt if yet he should be saved or not.

## 42

But otherwhere within the hut they two,  
 Odysseus and the keeper of the swine,  
 Sat eating with the rest their portion due.  
 When they had quelled desire of food and wine,  
 Then did Odysseus in his heart incline  
 Now of the noble swineherd to make proof,  
 Whether for nought he lend his love divine,  
 And house a giftless guest beneath his roof,  
 Or to the town him thrust, and hold the poor aloof.

## 43

“ Eumæus, and ye swineherds, hearken now !  
 I in the morning to the town will go,  
 Lest I should burden you, to beg : but thou  
 Give counsel, and a guide my way to show.  
 There might I find, in passing to and fro,  
 Victual from some one, and a cup to use,  
 Or even reach Odysseus' house, and so  
 To sage Penelope unfold some news ;  
 Nor haply would the suitors from their store refuse

## 44

“ Some trifle. I can serve them how they will.  
 Hear me in this thing which I truly tell :  
 For by the grace of herald Hermes still,  
 Who in all lands, wherever mortals dwell,  
 Man's work doth prosper and make art excel,  
 None for shrewd service can at all aspire  
 Me to surpass—to carve and cook right well,  
 Wine to pour forth, cleave wood or pile a fire—  
 All that from meaner men their betters may require.”

## 45

Thou, noble swineherd, in amaze didst say :  
 "How now? what venture art thou fain to try?  
 Yearnest thou, friend, to be swept quite away,  
 Who with a light heart thinkest to come nigh  
 Lords whose fierce outrage climbs the iron sky?  
 Nor are the suitors served by men like thee,  
 But round about them, waiting on their eye,  
 Youths of rich raiment in attendance be,  
 With shining locks, and faces very fair to see.

## 46

"These are their servants, and the burnished board  
 Stands laden ever with meat, corn, and wine.  
 Stay then, and take what we can here afford;  
 No burden comes by any need of thine;  
 Nor I myself, nor these who tend the swine,  
 Grudge thee such help as we have power to show.  
 But when the dear son of my lord divine  
 Returns, he robe and tunic will bestow,  
 And send thee wheresoever thou art fain to go."

## 47

Whom the divine Odysseus in reply,  
 The man of many sufferings, straight addressed :  
 "Eumæus, now may Father Zeus on high  
 Hold thee as dear, so love thee in his breast,  
 As I do, whom a stranger, sore distrest  
 And widely-wandered, thou hast made to cease  
 From sorrow! Very sweet it is to rest.  
 For unto mortal man no worse disease  
 Comes, than to wander widely over earth and seas.

## 48

“ But for their pinching belly’s sake men bear  
Evil extreme, and on their lives descend  
Roamings afar off, suffering and despair.  
But since thou fain wilt have me, ere I wend,  
His coming whom thou namedst here attend,  
Come, of divine Odysseus’ mother say  
And father, whom on threshold of life’s end  
He left, if yet they view the light of day,  
Or even now their steps have trod the sunless way.”

## 49

To him the swineherd, chief of men, replied :  
“ Indeed, dear stranger, I will truly say  
This word. Not yet hath old Laertes died,  
But hourly in his halls to Zeus doth pray  
That from the bones his soul may fade away.  
He for his son, who went long since to wage  
War under Ilion, grieveth night and day ;  
Nor for his dear wife’s loss can aught assuage  
His sorrow, which afflicts him with a crude old age.

## 50

“ She, for her child who crossed the rolling sea,  
Died by a drear death, as may never die  
Any who dwells here and is kind to me !  
While she yet lived, though griefs were ever nigh,  
Then had I still some heart to search and pry  
For tidings : since herself with tender care  
Had trained me with her child in years gone by,  
Her own dear child, my playmate, whom she bare—  
Ctimene best-beloved, her youngest and most fair.

## 51

“ So in the house I grew, and little less  
She loved me than the fruit of her own bed.  
But as our years moved, and sweet life did press  
Fast on the flower of youth, the maid was led  
From Ithaca to Samè, and there wed  
With countless dowry and exceeding store.  
Fair robes her mother on my shoulders spread,  
And, shod with sandals, sent me from her door  
Forth to the fields, and loved me in her heart yet more.

## 52

“ I miss the old life now ; but Heaven hath blessed  
My labours, and provided drink and meat,  
And something for the poor. Yet since this pest  
Came on the house, 'tis very hard, I weet,  
That from my mistress I get nothing sweet,  
No word, no work. For servants much desire  
Talk with their mistress, and to drink and eat  
Free in her presence, and the news enquire,  
Then homeward, warmed in heart, with some dear gift retire.”

## 53

And wary-wise Odysseus answering said :  
“ Ah, how thy tender life long wanderings knew  
Far from the land where thou wast born and bred !  
But come now, tell me this and tell me true,  
If foemen to the dust that city threw  
Wherein thy parents large estate did keep,  
Or coming overseas an evil crew  
Found thee defenceless with the kine or sheep,  
And to this master sold thee from beyond the deep.”

## 54

Answered the noble keeper of the swine :  
“ Since of these things thou askest, O my friend,  
Sit here at ease delighted and drink wine,  
And silently on this my tale attend.  
For now the nights move slowly and scarce end ;  
Yea, there is room for slumber, and to keep  
Watch, and a listening ear to sweet words lend.  
Needs not at all unto thy couch to creep  
For some while yet. Harm comes from even too much sleep.

## 55

“ Yet of the rest if any wish to go,  
Let him betake himself at once to bed,  
And in the morning, soon as light doth show,  
Drive the king's swine when he hath fairly fed.  
But we two, drinking wine and eating bread,  
Will charm our dear hearts each with other's pain.  
Past sorrow, and the tears a man hath shed,  
Who far hath wandered over earth and main,  
Yield comfort. Therefore now will I this tale explain.

## 56

“ There is an island, Syria called by name,  
Over against Ortygia. It may be  
That to thy ears some rumour of it came,  
When thou wast roaming over earth and sea.  
It is the land where the sun's turnings be,  
Not over-peopled, but of soil divine ;  
A good land, teeming with fertility,  
Rich with green pastures feeding flocks and kine,  
A fair land fed with streams, a land of corn and wine ;



## 57

" A land where hunger never enters in ;  
 No sickness on the tribes of men, no tears,  
 Fall from the hour in which their days begin.  
 There in the city void of pain and fears  
 They dwell, and ever as they wax in years  
 Apollo, coming with his silver bow,  
 Aims with his sister the light-feathered spears  
 Against them, and the sweet life fades like snow ;  
 Calm, without pain, the spirit from the bones doth flow.

## 58

" Twain are the cities, and an equal share  
 Of all things is to either portioned well.  
 My godlike father of both realms was heir,  
 Ctesius Ormenides. And, so it fell,  
 Phœnicians with a thousand things to sell  
 Came, very wolves for lucre, false of heart.  
 A woman in my father's house did dwell,  
 Fair, tall, and skilled in every splendid art ;  
 And her these schemers lured with treachery to their part.

## 59

" First by the hollow ship, when on a day  
 She went to wash, one mingled with her there  
 In sweet love, which so often leads astray,  
 And warps to ill with its seducing snare,  
 The female heart of women, howsoe'er  
 Toward righteousness inclined within their breast.  
 He parting asked her who she was, and where  
 Had come from. She the high-roofed house confessed,  
 Her father's own, and thus her paramour addressed :

## 60

“ ‘I from the land of mine-famed Sidon come.  
 Child of rich Arybas I boast to be.  
 Once Taphian pirates, as I wended home,  
 Found me afield, and o'er the rolling sea  
 Led to this mansion of my lord, and he  
 There to the sailors a fit price consigned.’  
 Then said the man that loved her secretly :  
 ‘Come thou with us, and thy dear father find  
 And mother—they yet live, with store of every kind.’

## 61

“ Answered the woman, and this word did say :  
 ‘Yea, such a thing might happen, would ye swear,  
 O sailors, not to harm me on the way.’  
 So did she speak, and, when the sailors sware,  
 ‘Hush!’ said the woman, ‘and let each beware  
 That neither word to me nor sign be made,  
 Walking or near the well, lest one declare  
 Our meeting, and my lord, of guile afraid,  
 Bind me, plan death for you—keep quiet, and ply your trade.

## 62

“ ‘When, stored and laden, ye would leave the land,  
 Then to the palace send ye word to me.  
 Gold will I bring, whatever comes to hand,  
 Yea and a further ship-fare, it may be ;  
 For in the halls I tend continually  
 A brave man’s boy, a little sprightly thing,  
 Just fit for running at his nurse’s knee,  
 My master’s child—him also I might bring,  
 And win large wealth for you from some far distant king.’

## 63

“ She having spoken to the fair house went.  
And they, abiding with us a whole year,  
Safe in the hollow bark their produce pent.  
So when by traffic they much goodly gear  
Had gotten, and the time to sail drew near,  
They to the palace sent a man to tell  
The woman. He, with wits alive and clear,  
Came with a necklace of fine gold to sell,  
With bright electron linked right wondrously and well.

## 64

“ My mother and her maidens in the hall  
Handled the work and with wide eyes surveyed,  
Seeming to buy : but he the voiceless call  
Signed with his eyebrows, and his journey made  
Back to the hollow vessel. She then laid  
Her hand on mine, leading me forth, and found  
Cups in the porch and tables well arrayed,  
Left by the feasters of my sire renowned,  
All lately gone, to session of the people bound.

## 65

“ Three goblets in her bosom she concealed,  
I wending with her in my simple thought ;  
And the sun fell, and every way was veiled.  
Thus we with speed the noble haven sought  
Where lay the bark of the Phœnicians, fraught  
With goodly cargo, very swift to sail.  
Me and the woman they on ship-board brought,  
Embarked, and spread the canvass to the gale,  
Nor did the wind of Zeus along the waters fail.

## 66

“Six nights and days we sailed the ocean well ;  
But when Kronion brought the seventh day,  
Artemis shot the woman, and she fell  
Plump like a sea-coot in the hold, and they  
Cast her to seals and fishes for a prey,  
And I was left in sorrow. Wind and floods  
Carried us in the ship to Ithaca,  
And here Laertes bought me with his goods.  
Thus have mine eyes beheld these rocks and waving woods.”

## 67

And Zeus-beloved Odysseus spake this word :  
“Surely, Eumæus, thy long tale of pain  
Deep in my breast my very soul hath stirred,  
Anguish so heavy on thy life hath lain.  
Yet Zeus with loss hath given thee also gain.  
Thou to the house of a kind man didst come,  
Who thee with food and fire doth entertain,  
And a good life thou ledest ; but I roam  
Sad through the haunts of men, unloved, without a home.”

## 68

Thus they conversed, then slept a little while,  
Not long—so quickly fair-throned Morning shone.  
Now had Telemachus attained the isle.  
His comrades furl the sails, the mast take down,  
And to the harbour row the vessel on,  
Cast anchor, tie the hawser, leap to land,  
Eat food, drink wine. But when desire was gone,  
Telemachus began : “Now ye, my band,  
Ply forward to the town, and there the black ship strand.

## 69

“ I to my fields and herdsmen wend, to see  
 The farm-work, and will seek at eventide  
 The city. In the morning, it may be,  
 I for your service will due wage provide,  
 Meat, wine, a noble banquet.” Then replied  
 Brave Theoclymenus, the godlike seer :  
 “ Now, whither shall I go, or where abide ?  
 What house apply to, of what princely peer ?  
 Thine shall I seek, the suppliant of thy mother dear ?”

## 70

And sage Telemachus in answer spake :  
 “ Now at another season verily  
 I had not failed myself to bid thee take  
 Such as our own house might afford, since we  
 Lack not the means of welcome ; but for thee  
 ’Twere the worse way ; for I shall not be there,  
 Nor in the house wouldst thou my mother see,  
 Who with the suitors doth not oft appear,  
 But with her maids apart still weaveth year by year.

## 71

“ Yet, as befalleth, can I name thee one  
 Who in thy need would lend thee shelter due,  
 Of warlike Polybus the glorious son,  
 Whom now the folk as an immortal view—  
 Eurymachus, the best of all that sue  
 My mother, and desiring most to wear,  
 Through the wife’s right, my father’s regal due.  
 But Zeus, who dwells in the Olympian air,  
 Knows if the evil day first cause them to forbear.”

## 72

He spake, and on a sudden came in sight  
A bird, a falcon, courier of the sky  
To lord Apollo, flying on the right.  
He a white dove, clenched in his claws, on high  
Plucked as he flew, the feathers falling nigh,  
Between the black ship and Telemachus.  
He then, much wondering at the augury,  
Was drawn apart by Theoclymenus,  
Who firmly clasped his hand, and in his ear spake thus :

## 73

“ Not without God came flying on the right  
This falcon. I myself, when he appeared,  
Something discerned foreshadowed in his flight.  
No race more kingly than your own is reared  
In Ithaca ; you most are to be feared !”  
Forthwith in answer to the seer spake he :  
“ True be the sign, O stranger much revered !  
Then shalt thou soon be dearly loved by me,  
And win large gifts, that men shall bless thee when they see.”

## 74

He ceased, and to Piræus, follower true :  
“ Piræus, child of Clytius, evermore  
Loyal in service above all my crew,  
All who went with me to the Pylian shore,  
Now for my sake receive within thy door  
This stranger-guest with love, till I appear.”  
Answered Piræus the renowned in war :  
“ How long soever thou shalt linger here,  
Him with all love will I exceedingly revere.”

## 75

Thus having spoken he with all his men  
Embarked. Telemachus his sandals fair  
Linked deftly underneath his feet, and then  
Grasped in his hand the great steel-pointed spear.  
Soon they unmoor, and through the waters fare  
Straight to the city, as Odysseus' son  
Commanded. He with eager strides to where  
Slept at the farm his myriad swine passed on,  
Till of the loyal swineherd he the lodging won.

# BOOK XVI.

ODYSSEUS DISCOVERS HIMSELF TO TELEMACHUS.





## BOOK XVI.

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### 1

MEANWHILE within the swineherd's hut they twain  
Kindle a fire at daybreak, fain to eat,  
And to the field the herdsmen wend again.  
Silent the shrill-tongued dogs run forth to meet  
Telemachus, and him with fawnings greet ;  
And brave Odysseus in his mind did mark  
Their fawnings, and a sound of nearing feet,  
And spake : " Eumæus, the dogs fail to bark ;  
One of thine own familiars comes to find thee. Hark !

### 2

" His feet are on the threshold." Scarce the word  
Was spoken, and before them stood his son.  
Up sprang Eumæus, with amazement stirred,  
And from his hands let fall the bowls, whereon  
He laboured mixing wine, and came anon  
Straight to his master, and fell weeping sore  
Upon his master's neck, and, even as one  
Who scarce believeth, felt him o'er and o'er,  
And kissed his beauteous eyes and both hands evermore.

## 3

Look, when a loving father of true heart  
 Kisses his own one child, exceeding dear,  
 Now beyond hope from some far distant part  
 Of the wide earth at last in the tenth year  
 Returning, and for whom full many a tear  
 Nightly and daily in his grief he shed—  
 So the good swineherd to the prince came near,  
 Fell on his neck, and kissed his eyes and head,  
 As one from sheer death rescued, and thus weeping said :

## 4

“Thou, O Telemachus, my life, my light,  
 Returnest : yet my soul did often say  
 That never never more should I have sight  
 Of thy sweet face, since thou didst sail away.  
 Enter, dear child, and let my heart allay  
 Her yearnings : newly art thou come from far :  
 Thou comest all too seldom, fain to stay  
 In the thronged city where the suitors are,  
 Silently looking on while foes thy substance mar.”

## 5

And wise Telemachus in answer spake :  
 “This word shall not return unto thee vain,  
 My father ; be content ; 'tis for thy sake  
 I come, that I may see thy face again,  
 And hear if yet my mother doth remain  
 Housed in the royal palace, or hath wed  
 Some Argive eminent among the train  
 Of suitors, while perchance Odysseus' bed  
 Stript of the couch-ropes lieth, with vile cobwebs spread.”

## 6

To whom the swineherd, chief of men, replied :  
"Pent in the royal chambers night and day  
She very patiently doth yet abide ;  
But evermore her sweet life pines away,  
Slowly, with tears." Thus did the swineherd say.  
But he, resigning from his hand the spear,  
Over the stony threshold took his way :  
And brave Odysseus, his own father dear,  
Retiring from his seat, rose when his son came near.

## 7

But him Telemachus restrained anon :  
"Sit, stranger ; I will find a seat elsewhere.  
Here is a man will soon provide me one."  
Him thus he stayed. The swineherd spread with care  
Twigs and a thick fleece for his lord, and there  
Telemachus sat down. Then of the meat,  
Left yesterday, Eumæus gave due share  
To each, and bread in baskets piled to eat,  
And in the ivy cup the red wine mingled sweet.

## 8

When all things were prepared, himself the last  
Sat fronting brave Odysseus, chief divine,  
And on the banquet eager hands they cast.  
But when desire had ceased of food and wine,  
Spake to the noble keeper of the swine  
Telemachus : " Good father, whence to thee  
Hath come this stranger o'er the watery brine ?  
Who did the sailors boast themselves to be ?  
Never methinks on foot to this our land came he."

## 9

Swineherd Eumæus, then didst thou reply :  
 " All this, dear child, will I declare and show.  
 Of wide Crete he proclaims his ancestry,  
 And among men much wandering to and fro  
 Long time he underwent, for even so  
 God willed to weave his fortune. Now to me,  
 Fled from Thesprotian bark, he comes, and lo !  
 I pass him on in sacred trust to thee.  
 Do what thou wilt ; thy suppliant he doth claim to be."

## 10

But he : " Eumæus, thou dost sorely grieve  
 My spirit by the word thy lips have said.  
 How can I, young in years, this guest receive,  
 Thus weak to ward off outrage from his head ?  
 Also two ways my mother's mind is led,  
 Whether with me to keep house, reverencing  
 Voice of the people and her husband's bed,  
 Or to depart, some hero following  
 Who of the suitor-train shall chief endowment bring.

## 11

" Yet will I give, to speed him on his way,  
 Both robe and tunic, sandals and a sword ;  
 Only allow him in thy hut to stay.  
 Food will I send and raiment, lest thy hoard  
 Wane ; but I cannot take him to my board,  
 Where sit the suitors in their godless glee,  
 Lest mid the revel the poor man be abhorred  
 And taunted, and dire anguish come to me.  
 Even the brave must fail when many foes there be."

12

And the divine Odysseus answering spake :  
 " O friend, since even I can say my say,  
 Now of a truth my very heart ye break,  
 Hearing the godless schemes these suitors lay  
 Against a just man, better far than they.  
 Art thou kept under of thine own free will ?  
 Or doth the general hate a voice obey  
 From God ? or brothers dost thou blame, whom still  
 Staunch at the sword we trust amid the mightiest ill ?

13

" Had I but youth as I have heart, or were  
 The blameless brave Odysseus, or his son,  
 Then let a stranger strike me headless there,  
 If against any I leave revenge undone !  
 Or should I fail, since many are matched with one,  
 Better to fall on mine own hearth than see  
 Strangers abused, maids dragged about, with none  
 To help them, corn and wine continually  
 Laid waste in the dire lust of lawless revelry."

14

Answered the sage Telemachus in turn :  
 " All this, O stranger, will I tell thee true.  
 Nor doth the public zeal against me burn,  
 Nor brethren do I blame, whom still men view  
 Staunch at the sword though a great strife ensue.  
 Our line is single : to Arkeisias one  
 Zeus gave, Laertes : of his loins there grew  
 Odysseus ; he too is an only son ;  
 Who left me his sole child, enjoyment reaping none.

## 15

“Therefore, alas! our house is filled with griefs.  
Sorely we mourn with myriad foes distrest.  
Dulichium, Samè, all the island-fiefs,  
Send me their chieftain-hordes from east and west,  
With names of rugged Ithaca the best.  
These woo my mother, but forestal the dower;  
She nor refuses nor can grant a quest  
So grievous: thus they spend with all their power  
My substance: even myself ere long they will devour.

## 16

“But this the gods in their own knees do keep.  
Old man, go tell the wise Penelope  
That safe from Pylos I have sailed the deep.  
Here will I stay till thou return; but see  
None hear it else, since many foes for me  
Scheme evil.” Thou, O swineherd, didst reply:  
“I hear, I know, thy servant heedeth thee.  
But teach me plainly: on my way shall I  
Laertes tell, who alway doth lamenting lie?”

## 17

“He the farm-business could attend while yet  
Grief only for Odysseus made him smart,  
And in the house among his servants ate  
And drank whene'er he listed in his heart;  
But from the hour wherein thou didst depart  
On ship for Pylos, he no more, they say,  
Cares for his fields, but, stricken with the dart  
Of sorrow, sits bewailing night and day,  
While on his aged bones the starved flesh pines away.”

## 18

Whereto the sage Telemachus replied :  
" So much the worse ! yet, sorrowing for his sake,  
Still must we let him in his woes abide.  
For, if poor mortals had the power to make  
Choice of their fortune, we were fain to take  
First my dear sire's return—let *him* then be !  
But to my mother thou the tidings break,  
And bid her send the house-dame secretly,  
Who the old man may tell what she hath heard from thee."

## 19

Thus did he urge the swineherd forth ; and he,  
Binding his sandals, hasted to depart,  
Not by Athene unbeheld. Then she  
Like to a woman, at the door apart,  
Fair, tall, and skilled in every splendid art,  
Stood near them, only by Odysseus seen ;  
Nor could Telemachus with eyes or heart  
At all discern her ; since the gods, I ween,  
Show not to all mankind their features, form, and mien.

## 20

But her Odysseus and the dogs descried,  
Nor did they bark, but cowering with low whine  
Slunk through the dwelling to the farther side.  
She with her eyelids to the chief divine  
Beckoned, and he forth issuing at the sign  
Came, and she spake : " Odysseus, wise and great,  
Hide from thy child no longer this design,  
That for the ruthless guests within thy gate  
Death ye may scheme together, and murder, and black fate.



## 21

“The hour is come ; devise your plans, and go  
Hence to the far-famed city. Nor will I  
Linger, myself on fire to meet the foe.”  
She spake, and lifting her gold wand on high  
There touched him ; and a robe washed beautifully  
And a rich tunic round his breast appeared.  
He in life’s flower, arrayed in majesty,  
Stood dark of mien, a warrior to be feared,  
While round his manly chin curled shining the black beard.

## 22

Thus passed the goddess, and he turning trod  
The threshold ; and his child, amazed in heart,  
Blenched from the vision, lest it prove a god,  
And spake in wingèd words : “ O friend, thou art  
Other than when thou didst of late depart.  
Changed is thy raiment, nor thy flesh the same.  
If, as I think, some heavenly god thou art,  
Victims and gifts of gold, thy sacred claim,  
Deign to receive with favour, nor thy servants blame.”

## 23

And the much-suffering brave Odysseus spake :  
“ Why liken me to gods ? no god am I.  
I am thine own dear father, for whose sake  
Often and often thou dost groan and sigh,  
Bowed in thy soul with outrage fierce and high.”  
Then kissed him, and to earth the tear let fall,  
By force till now stifled continually.  
Telemachus, not yet believing all,  
Quickly in words made answer to his father’s call :

## 24

“ No, thou art not my father nor by name  
Odysseus, but, of power divine, dost long  
With flattering words to mock me to my shame,  
That I, whose grief already is far too strong,  
May learn new weepings and a mightier wrong.  
Not of himself could man this scheme unfold,  
But God can lightly make one old or young,  
And thou of late wast wrapt in rags and old,  
Who now resemblest gods that heaven's dominion hold.”

## 25

Answered Odysseus : “ O Telemachus,  
When thy dear father hath arrived, not thee  
Beseemeth all agaze to marvel thus.  
Other Odysseus cometh none save me.  
Behold me as I am ! By earth and sea  
Scourged with affliction, in the twentieth year,  
Safe to mine own land at the last I flee.  
As for my changed form, understand me clear,  
This is Athene's work, brave wielder of the spear.

## 26

“ She, thou hast seen it, gave me, for she can,  
What form soever she would have me wear.  
Now to the likeness of a poor old man  
She moulds me ; now the lineaments I bear  
Of some brave youth adorned with raiment fair.  
So light and easy is it for that race,  
Who in the regions of the heavenly air  
Dominion wield, to change our form and face,  
And a weak mortal man to glorify or debase.”

## 27

This spoken, he sat down. Telemachus  
Rose, and clung weeping round his father's breast.  
There the pent grief rained o'er them, yearning thus.  
Louder they wailed than on the rock's lone crest  
Eagle or hook-nailed vulture, from whose nest  
Rude churls the unfeathered young have stol'n away.  
Thus piteously they wailed in sore unrest,  
And on their weepings had gone down the day,  
But that at last Telemachus found words to say :

## 28

“Tell me what ship, dear father, to our strand  
Brought thee, and who the sailors boast to be ;  
For sure I am thou never cam'st by land.”  
He answered : “ All will I make known to thee.  
Led by Phæacians, famed in every sea,  
Who convoy lend to all that convoy crave,  
I came. On Ithaca they landed me  
Asleep, and many a splendid gift they gave,  
Now by divine command all stored in a great cave,

## 29

“ Brass, gold, and woven raiment : and I come  
Here to the swineherd by Athene's rede,  
That for the foemen who usurp our home  
Death we may seal, and scheme a bloody deed.  
Now count me up the list, while I give heed  
To learn how many and what sort they are,  
These suitors, and take thought if there be need  
For other helpers to seek near and far,  
Or if our own sole strength avail us in the war.”

## 30

Then said Telemachus, the wise of heart :  
“ Always, my father, on thy name doth wait  
Huge glory, and I know thee what thou art,  
Fierce in the field and prudent in debate.  
But thou hast spoken a thing direly great,  
And deep astonishment comes over me.  
Never was written in the scroll of fate  
That two men should achieve this victory  
Over a host of heroes, brave exceedingly.

## 31

“ Know that the suitors who thy substance eat  
Count not alone one decad nor yet two,  
But far more, far too many for us to meet.  
Wait now and hear, while I their list review.  
First from Dulichium young men fifty-two,  
Best of the people, have usurped our floor :  
These bring six servants, their behests to do.  
Also from Samè there are twenty-four ;  
And from Zacynthus isle comes also a full score.

## 32

“ From Ithaca itself twelve men there be,  
All of them heroes of a noble line,  
And these bring with them to the revelry  
Medon the herald, and the bard divine,  
And, skilled in ministry of food and wine,  
Two servants. Therefore, could we light on all,  
Vengeance, I fear, too smarting sad were thine.  
But think if some true comrade we may call  
Who with us twain may stand, whatever strife befall.”

## 33

Much-toiled Odysseus, chief divine, replies :  
“ Now will I speak, and thou in spirit weigh  
This counsel : if Athene may suffice,  
With Father Zeus, to be our help and stay—  
Or must I seek a mightier yet than they ? ”  
And spake the wise Telemachus again :  
“ Good helpers are they both, though far away,  
High in the clouds reclining ; for these twain  
Wide over all mankind and gods immortal reign.”

## 34

Much-toiled Odysseus, chief divine, replies :  
“ Neither, I promise, will be absent long  
When the loud peal of battle shall arise,  
And we, debating with our foemen strong,  
Ares invoke to weigh the right and wrong.  
But thou with early dawn go speedily  
Homeward, and join the contumelious throng ;  
And afterward the swineherd shall bring me,  
Like to a poor old man, right pitiable to see.

## 35

“ And though they deal upon me sore despite  
Even in mine own house, let thy soul forbear !  
Ay, though with missiles they should wound outright  
And drag me from the doors by feet and hair,  
Calmly look on and let thy soul forbear !  
Yet from their folly bid them still relent,  
And strive to turn them with a gentle prayer ;  
Albeit I know that they will not repent,  
So surely their dark hour of doom stands imminent.

## 36

“ Also, my son, this other scheme I find,  
And thou revolve it well within thy heart :  
When wise Athene shall inspire my mind,  
Then will I nod to thee by stealth apart ;  
And thou delay not with each sword and dart,  
And every warlike weapon in our hall,  
Quick at the secret signal to depart,  
And in the chamber to bestow them all,  
Far out of reach, in safety, till occasion call.

## 37

“ And when the suitors miss them, softly thou  
Beguile them from the mark, and answering say :  
‘ Out of the smoke I laid them, since not now  
Like to those arms they seem in olden day  
Left by Odysseus when he sailed away,  
But smirched with fire : and Zeus a dread not light  
Hath given me, lest through wine ye stir a fray,  
And shame the feast, and mar with foul despite  
Your courtship : steel itself oft lures a man to fight.’

## 38

“ Yet leave at hand, for me alone and thee,  
Two swords, two shields, and beamy lances twain,  
That, when to battle we rush furiously,  
These we may find to our exceeding gain ;  
And Zeus with Pallas shall beguile the train  
Of suitors, and confound them in our snare :  
So shall they fall till not a life remain.  
Keep too this counsel in thy breast with care,  
If thou indeed art mine, and the same blood dost bear :

## 39

“ And that Odysseus is within let none  
Hear, not Laertes, not the swineherd, nor  
Penelope herself. We twain alone  
Will prove the women and their ways explore,  
If they love justice or the right abhor.  
Of the men-servants also we might see  
Who with a true heart reverence, as of yore,  
Thy name and mine, and who deal treacherously,  
And in their souls have dared to spurn a man like thee.”

## 40

He answered: “ Father, thou shalt find thy son  
No dastard: yet methinks small gain it were  
If, passing to and fro to prove each one,  
Spoilers thou leave who neither feel nor spare.  
’Twere a good work to sift the women there,  
And the disloyal from the good discern;  
But to the country would I not repair  
To prove the men, but to this business turn  
Hereafter, if from Zeus true omen thou canst learn.”

## 41

They in the hut conversing lingered thus.  
Meantime the sailors, steering from the main  
In the good ship which bore Telemachus,  
From Pylos, safely to the town attain.  
So when at last the haven deep they gain,  
Quickly they hale the black ship to the shore,  
And with a good will the seafaring train  
Take from the hollow bark her naval store.  
Then to the house of Clytius the fair gifts they bore.

## 42

But to Odysseus' house the herald went  
Of her dear son, to tell Penelope,  
Both how he tarried and the bark had sent  
Thus swiftly "lest the queen continually  
Touched with a tender sorrow weep for me."  
And lo! the herald and the swineherd met  
On the same errand, and came speedily  
Into the palace of the king to get  
Their hearing; and his news the herald forth did set:

## 43

"O queen, thy dear son hath returned this day!"  
And afterward the swineherd, standing near,  
All things in order to the queen did say,  
And then departed to his swine. But fear  
Seized on the suitors at a word so drear.  
Cold sank the heart within them; and they went  
Sheer past the wall of the great court, and there,  
Darkly debating on the dire event,  
Held session by the gates in sore astonishment.

## 44

First spake Eurymachus: "O friends, this day  
Telemachus hath wrought in our despite  
A wondrous work. Launch quickly as ye may,  
And man with fishers a swift bark outright,  
Who to sail homeward shall our friends invite."  
Scarce had he said when, turning round his face,  
Amphinomus beheld the bark in sight,  
Some holding oars, while others furled apace  
The sails. He sweetly laughed, and answered from his place:



## 45

“Enough! they are within. Some god perchance  
Hath told them, or they marked the ship go by  
And could not catch her.” Then they all advance  
Down to the main, and the ship speedily  
Hale on the beach and leave her stranded high,  
While with a good will the seafaring crew  
Take out the naval gear. The suitors fly  
Straight toward the forum to debate anew,  
But all the rest exclude, young men and elders too.

## 46

Then first Epeithes' child Antinous spake :  
“How proof against all peril the gods keep  
This man! By day close sentry still we make,  
And in relays along the windy steep  
Watch, nor in dark night on the land we sleep,  
But sail in ambush till the glimmering shine  
Of dawn, to snare him in the secret deep.  
Yet seemeth all the while some power divine  
Wafted him home securely through the rolling brine.

## 47

“Come, let us scheme against him a sure death,  
That he no longer to our loss rebel.  
Never shall we, while he draws living breath,  
Prosper, so far doth he in craft excel.  
Nor do the people love us wholly well.  
Haste, ere to council he the Achaians call ;  
For never will he cease from vengeance fell  
Short of our ruin, but will teach them all  
How we sheer death for him have woven to our fall.

48

“Think ye the people, when our work they hear,  
Will praise us, and not rather, fired in heart,  
Wreak on our own heads a dire loss severe,  
And drive us from the land? By secret art  
Let us forestal him in the fields apart,  
Or in the way: then quickly might we share  
His treasures, each receiving a due part,  
And to his mother give this mansion fair,  
With him to have and hold who should espouse her there.

49

“But if this word displease you which I say,  
And ye be willing he should still live on,  
Heir of his father in the face of day,  
Then for the future let us leave undone  
This wasting of his heart's desire, nor shun  
To leave him scatheless in his halls and free;  
And from his own abode let every one  
Sue with rich gifts his mother, if haply she  
Wed whom Fate wills, and who shall render amplest fee.”

50

There he made pause, and in his place each one  
Sat mute, and wondered what should come to pass:  
And thus spake forth Amphinomus, the son  
Of Nisus, child of lord Aretias,  
Who from Dulichium, rich in corn and grass,  
Crossed over, chief of the Dulichian clan.  
He to Penelope right pleasing was  
For worth of words, and a true-hearted man.  
He now, their firm well-wisher, in the midst began:

## 51

“ Friends, I for one were very loth to kill  
Telemachus. To slay the royal seed  
Is no light thing. But let us learn the will  
Of Heaven, the doom by mighty Zeus decreed.  
Then, if the oracles advise indeed  
His downfall, I myself the work will dare  
Right boldly, and the rest against him lead ;  
But if the gods against our scheme declare,  
Then in the face of Heaven I warn you to forbear.”

## 52

Thus spake the brave Amphinomus, and they  
Consenting rose up, and the palace sought,  
And on the burnished thrones in fair array  
Sat. But the queen, revolving a new thought,  
Now to the suitors, who for ever wrought  
Outrage extreme, was minded to appear.  
For herald Medon had the tidings brought,  
Who all their counsels had found means to hear,  
And how for her dear child they planned destruction sheer.

## 53

She with her train of maidens to the hall  
Came, flower of women, by the pillar stood,  
Over her face the shining veil let fall,  
And spake : “ Antinous, hater of all good,  
They call thee bravest of a noble brood  
In Ithaca for wit and sayings wise.  
Not such thou art, but of far different mood.  
Madman ! and durst thou in thy breast devise  
Death for my darling child, and even Zeus despise ?

## 54

“ Scorning the suppliant thou art scorning God.  
Not without crime ye cause a soul to die.  
Hast thou not heard how first thy father trod  
Our own hearth, a poor outcast, fain to fly  
Far from the people when their wrath was high ?  
For he, with Taphian pirates leagued for gain,  
Hurt the Thesprotians with his piracy,  
Who were our friends ; and all the folk were fain  
To avenge them, and thy sire would with the sword have slain,

## 55

“ And dashed the dear life from his bones outright,  
And his sweet wealth devoured till none remained,  
Had not Odysseus at their fury’s height  
Held them aloof and their proud heart restrained.  
Him, O Antinous, hast thou now disdained ;  
His wealth thou spoilest, and his wife dost woo,  
His son dost murder, and hast deeply pained  
My soul, and with keen sorrow pierced me through—  
Cease, and the rest forbid like outrage to renew !”

## 56

And answer made the bold Eurymachus :  
“ Icarus’ daughter, wise Penelope,  
Far be the cause to vex thy spirit thus !  
Cast off thy cares, and hearken now to me !  
Lives not the mortal, shall not, nor can be,  
(Nor what I utter will I leave undone)  
Who, while I breathe and the dear sunlight see,  
Shall lay hands on Telemachus thy son ;  
First shall around my spear his dark blood streaming run.

## 57

“For in my deep heart I remember yet  
How oft the brave Odysseus long ago  
Me, when a child, upon his knees did set,  
And in my fingers the sweet food bestow,  
And reach me the red wine. For this I owe  
Telemachus much love, and far more dear  
Hold him than all men whom on earth I know.  
From these at least let him in no wise fear  
Death : but of stroke divine no mortal can keep clear.”

## 58

Thus her he cheered, but weaved in his own heart  
Destruction for her child. She turning stept  
Back to her shining chamber far apart.  
There on her soul a sad remembrance swept,  
While oft and bitterly she wailed and wept  
Odysseus, as of old, her husband dear,  
Nor closed the lamentation till she slept ;  
For to her eyelids did Athene bear  
Sweet slumbers, shed with rest, that might her strength repair.

## 59

But to Odysseus and his son again  
Came back at eve the swineherd. They good cheer  
Were now preparing from a swine just slain,  
A yearling. But Athene standing near  
Touched with her wand and agèd made appear  
Laertiades Odysseus. She his frame  
Wrapt in foul rags, and did with wrinkles sear  
His fair flesh, lest the swineherd when he came  
Should know him, and the tidings to the queen proclaim.

## 60

Him entering first Telemachus addressed :

“ Hail, good Eumæus! what new thing to-day  
Is talked of in the town? Do they now rest  
From ambush—the proud suitors? or yet lay  
Their trains in secret, to beset my way?”

Swineherd Eumæus, thou didst answer make :

“ Not for such tidings did I care to stay,  
Roaming the city. With all speed I spake

The message, and made haste my homeward track to take.

## 61

“ Sent from thy friends a herald fleet met me,  
Came, and gave first the news : and something still  
I know for certain, which mine eyes did see.

Over against the city, by the hill

Of Hermes, I was hastening with good will

Back to my dwelling, when a swift ship drew

Down to the haven : shields the bark did fill,

And spears twain-edged, nor seemed the sailors few.

I guessed them to be these, but nothing more I knew.”

## 62

He ceased. The brave Telemachus meanwhile

Mused on the issue, and with sidelong eye

Smiled on his father a dark-meaning smile ;

Nor did the swineherd his quick glance espy.

So, when their work was ended, they apply

Their cares to feasting, and the table spread,

Nor to their keen zest ample scope deny.

But when desire of meat and drink had fled,

They took the gift of sleep, retiring each to bed.



## BOOK XVII.

ODYSSEUS, IN THE DISGUISE OF AN AGED BEGGAR, COMES TO  
HIS OWN HOUSE—THE DEATH OF HIS DOG ARGUS.





## BOOK XVII.

### 1

BUT when the rosy-fingered Dawn came on,  
Child of the mist, and light to mortals bare,  
Telemachus, Odysseus' noble son,  
Linked to his shining feet the sandals fair,  
And in his hand uplifted the great spear,  
Strong, deftly rounded to the palm, in train  
To seek the town ; but first his swineherd there  
Accosted : " Good my father, I am fain  
To go, that my dear mother see my face again.

### 2

" Not till my face with her own eyes she see,  
Shall the deep anguish of her tears relent.  
I go then : fail not to bring down with thee  
Thy guest, that whoso will may there present  
Food and a cup to cheer the suppliant spent  
With travail. All men can I not maintain,  
Though pierced with pity. If the man repent  
His coming, and feel anger, worse the pain  
For him ; but I love still the whole truth to make plain."

## 3

And wary-wise Odysseus answering said :  
 " Friend, I am loth to linger. For the poor  
 'Tis better in the town to beg their bread ;  
 Nor on a farm can I be any more  
 Taught to do this and that. Go thou before ;  
 And let this man, when I the fire have seen  
 And day grows warm, then bring me—straitened sore  
 Am I for garments—lest the dayspring keen  
 Smite me with chills : ye said the way was far, I ween."

## 4

He spake. Telemachus, with eager stride  
 Thence hurrying, for the suitors woe forecast.  
 Soon he arrived, and leaned his lance beside  
 The tall roof-pillar, and the threshold passed.  
 First Eurycleia marked him, as she cast  
 Rich fleeces on the carven thrones, and shed  
 Tears at the sight, and to her lord ran fast ;  
 While all the maidens whom his house had bred [head.  
 Flocked round him, wept, and kissed his shoulders, face, and

## 5

And from her chamber came like Artemis,  
 Or golden Aphrodite, the sage queen,  
 And with her arms clung round him, and did kiss  
 Face, eyes, and dwelt upon his beauteous mien,  
 And wingèd words sent forth her sobs between :  
 " Welcome, Telemachus, my life, my light !  
 Yet did I deem thee wholly lost, I ween,  
 When thou to seek thy sire in my despite  
 Didst sail for Pylos. Tell me, what hath met thy sight ?"

## 6

And her the wise Telemachus addressed :  
" Spare me, dear mother, saved from death but now,  
Nor stir the wakeful anguish in my breast.  
Wash thee, put on clean raiment, clear thy brow,  
Go with thy maidens and large offerings vow  
To all the gods, if haply Zeus at last  
Look from the heaven, and their long crime endow  
With vengeance. I will to the market haste,  
My guest to call, who late with me from Pylos passed.

## 7

" Him sent I forward with my godlike train,  
And to receive him brave Piræus bade  
With love and honour, till I came again."  
He spake, and wingless in her spirit stayed  
The word. She washed, and in clean robes arrayed  
Went to the chamber with her maids to vow.  
There unto all the heavenly gods she prayed,  
And vowed whole hecatombs, if haply now  
Zeus the long crime vouchsafe with vengeance to endow.

## 8

So from the hall Telemachus anon  
Passed holding in his hand the steely spear,  
And to the market moved, but not alone,  
For as he went his swift dogs followed near.  
Also Athene did with grace endear  
His form, that all the people gazed intent,  
And wondered while he passed without a peer.  
Then the proud suitors thronged him as he went,  
With fair words on the lip, with dark wrongs deeply meant.

## 9

These shunned he, and to Antiphus came on,  
Mentor, and Halitherses the brave seer,  
His friends from the beginning ; there sat down,  
And told whatever they were fain to hear.  
And lo ! Piræus, valiant with the spear,  
Now to the forum led the stranger guest  
Straight through the city ; and to these came near  
Telemachus, who scorned within his breast  
To slight the stranger. Him Piræus first addressed :

## 10

“ Telemachus, send women to my house  
To fetch what Menelaus gave to thee.”  
And answer made the wise Telemachus :  
“ Friend, (for we know not how these things shall be),  
If the proud suitors kill me secretly,  
And my sire's wealth divide, right fain I were  
Thyself, not one of these, shouldst hold in fee  
My treasures. But if I their doom prepare,  
Glad will I then receive what thou shalt gladly bear.”

## 11

Thus spake the prince, and homeward went his way,  
Leading the stranger whom he saved from woe.  
So when they came into the palace, they  
Quickly upon the chairs and benches throw  
Their robes, and from the great hall turning go  
Toward the bath-chamber, ere the sweet repast.  
There the maids wash them and rich oil bestow,  
And robe and tunic on their shoulders cast.  
Then from the bath they came and to the banquet passed.

## 12

And lo, a handmaid from a ewer of gold,  
Beautiful, rich with goodly chasings, poured  
Over a silver basin, made to hold  
The lustral stream, and set the shining board,  
And the discreet house-dame beside them stored  
Food for their use, and gave them of her best,  
And eke sweet wine did plenteously afford.  
Near the roof-pillar the fair queen at rest,  
Couched in their front, lay weaving a sea-purpled vest.

## 13

They eager hands upon the viands lay.  
But when desire of meat and drink had fled,  
Prudent Penelope began to say :  
“ Telemachus, now will I seek my bed,  
Wet with long weepings, and with sorrow spread,  
Since erst to Ilion brave Odysseus went.  
Yet thou—thou wouldst not, ere the suitors sped  
Back to the house, to my fond prayer relent,  
And, if aught clear thou heardest, show me the event.”

## 14

But he made answer : “ Now will I proclaim,  
Dear mother, the whole truth. To Pylos we  
And Nestor shepherd of the people came,  
Who in his halls with kind love welcomed me.  
Look, when a father his own son doth see,  
Whose feet from a far land the threshold tread  
Now after long years—with his children he  
Thus loved me, but could no more hear, he said,  
Aught of the brave Odysseus, if alive or dead.

## 15

“Natheless to Menelaus famed in war,  
To Sparta’s hold he bade me voyage make,  
And lent me horses and a well-built car.  
There I saw Argive Helen, for whose sake  
Argives and Trojans did much woe partake  
By judgment of the heavenly gods; and there  
To me brave warrior Menelaus spake,  
And asked me on what need I made repair  
To Sparta. I to him did all the truth declare.

## 16

“And he in answer to my words began :  
‘Fools, who all-strengthless have aspired to sleep  
In the void couch of a strong-hearted man!  
Even as a hind in lion’s lair doth keep  
Her tender sucklings lulled in slumbers deep,  
Then through the mountain-knees and grassy dells  
Roams feeding : he, returning home, doth leap  
Fierce on them both and in a moment quells—  
So on their heads Odysseus evil doom impels.

## 17

“‘O Father Zeus, Athene, and Apollo!  
Would that as once with Philomeleus’ son  
He wrestled, whom a stronger strength did follow,  
And hurled him to the Lesbian earth undone,  
All men rejoicing that Odysseus won—  
Would he might hurtle on the suitors so  
Swift death, sad marriage! But I will not shun  
Aught of thy quest, nor darken what I know.  
All that the old sea-god revealed will I thee show.

## 18

“ ‘ He to my question on the Pharian shore  
Spake of the Ithacan, Laertes’ child,  
How his own eyes had seen him weeping sore,  
Pent in the palace, in mid ocean isled,  
Of a celestial nymph, Calypso styled.  
She her reluctant fere doth aye constrain,  
Nor can he, sailing o’er the sea-deep wild,  
Gaze on the rough dear fatherland again,  
Reft both of oars and bark and all his valiant train ! ’

## 19

“ Thus to me warrior Menelaus spake ;  
And I, when I had ended all my quest,  
Departed ; and the gods launched in my wake  
A breeze which bore me through the hours of rest  
Swift to my country over ocean’s breast.”  
He ceased, but the queen’s heart was moved, and her  
The godlike Theoclymenus addressed :  
“ Wife of Laértiades Odysseus, hear !  
He only knows in part ; my prophecy is clear.

## 20

“ First of the gods bear witness Zeus the while,  
Thy table kind, the hearth which I have found,  
Hearth of the brave Odysseus void of guile,—  
E’en now thy husband on his native ground,  
Sitting or walking, hears an evil sound  
Of suitors in his hall, and vengeance dark  
Broods, which with dire fulfilment shall be crowned :  
Such omen, while I sat beside the bark,  
I knew, and called aloud, and bade thy son to mark ! ”



## 21

So spake the brave seer Theoclymenus,  
Who in his soul right well the omen knew.  
But wise Penelope addressed him thus :  
“ Ah ! if, dear stranger, but thy word come true,  
Such gifts will I bestow, such kind things do,  
That all who meet thee shall declare thee blest ! ”  
Thus spake the queen, but in sad words and few,  
For that she no more hoped within her breast  
Her dear lord to behold, and in his arms to rest.

## 22

They then the morning with such converse wore.  
The suitors all those hours in pastime spent,  
And spear and whistling discus, as of yore,  
Hurled on the well-smoothed ground without a dent,  
Whither of old for their proud play they went.  
But when the time drew near their meal to make,  
And as aforetime from the fields were sent  
Flocks, and the same men brought them, Medon spake,  
Who most of heralds pleased, and did their feasts partake :

## 23

“ Young men, (for now desire of sport hath ceased),  
Hence to the banquet with all speed repair,  
For it is no bad thing betimes to feast.”  
So did he speak. The suitors, rising there,  
Cease from their games and to the palace fare,  
Obedient to the word. Each entering laid  
His beauteous mantle on a bench or chair.  
Then goats, fat swine, and sheep they killed and flayed,  
With heifer from the herd, and the rich feast purveyed.

## 24

Then were Odysseus and the swineherd fain  
To seek the town ; but first the swineherd said :  
“ Friend, since no longer thou wilt here remain,  
Come with me, as my lord commandment laid.  
Thee for my own part would I fain have made  
Guard of the farm, but his rebuke I fear.  
Sharp is the zeal of masters disobeyed.  
Come let us go, for the sun’s fall is near,  
Lest haply soon thou feel the evening chills severe.”

## 25

And wary-wise Odysseus answering said :  
“ I hear, I know, I understand it all :  
Now will I follow, by thy guidance led.  
Yet prithee lend me, if thou hast withal,  
A staff to lean on, lest perchance I fall ;  
Ye said the road was slippery.” Thus he spake.  
Eumæus found him a fit staff and tall ;  
He on his shoulders the fowl scrip did take ;  
Then onward to the town they twain their journey make.

## 26

Thus they went forth, while dogs and herdsman stay  
To watch the homestead and the swine to keep.  
He to the city led his lord away,  
Like to a poor old man, in anguish deep,  
Who stooping o’er a staff doth feebly creep,  
And on his thin form evil rags appear.  
So when they came along the hillside steep  
Close to the city, and the fount drew near,  
Fair-streaming, whence the folk their daily water bear—

## 27

Even that fountain which Polyctor made  
 With Ithacus and Neritus—all round  
 Grove of dank alders doth the stream o'ershade,  
 And from the high rock the cold waters bound,  
 And mix their murmur with the silver sound  
 Of leaves that whisper all a summer's day ;  
 There too an altar of the Nymphs is found,  
 Reared on the height ; and whoso comes that way  
 Still to the Nymphs is wont due sacrifice to pay—

## 28

There did Melantheus overtake them, son  
 Of Dolius, with two keepers of the herd.  
 Goats to the palace was he driving on,  
 Choice, very fair, from all the flocks preferred,  
 To feast the suitors. He a bitter word  
 Spake to them loudly in his scornful ire,  
 And at the poor men's penury did gird  
 With gibes unseemly, cruel, fierce, and dire,  
 While in Odysseus' breast he filled the heart with fire :

## 29

“ See how God ever like with like doth pair,  
 And still the worthless doth the worthless lead !  
 Unenviable swineherd, tell me where  
 This wretch wouldst thou bestow? Not such we need,  
 Banes of the banquet, very wolves to feed.  
 He by the doorposts loitering in the way  
 Will rub his shoulders, and to sate his greed  
 Prowl mid the suitors for vile scraps of prey,  
 Nor sword nor caldron earn by any manly play.

## 30

“ If thou wouldst lend him for a while to me,  
The stalls to sweep, and for the kids supply  
Young leaves for pasture, very soon would he  
Swill the rich whey and nourish a stout thigh.  
But the ill caitiff of all toil is shy,  
And with a hell-deep maw doth cringe about  
For victuals. Mark me, for I will not lie !  
Once let him set foot mid the suitors' rout,  
Soon will his ribs and head the flying stools wear out.”

## 31

Thus the man spake, and passing with rude foot,  
Blind in the fury of his foolish heart,  
Odysseus spurned—who never budged a jot,  
But in the road stobd rooted, and apart  
Mused if he now should on Melanthius dart,  
And with his staff the soul extinguish there,  
Or, on the earth dashed, make the skull-bones start  
Asunder—but he ruled himself to bear,  
While the good swineherd spake, uplifting hands of prayer :

## 32

“ Virgins of Zeus, ye fountain-nymphs divine,  
If that Odysseus thighs did ever burn  
Of lambs or kids, fat-folded, at your shrine,  
Fulfil the hope wherewith in soul I yearn !  
May God yet bring him, may that man return !  
Then will he fling thy finery to the wind,  
Wherein rejoicing thou the poor dost spurn,  
Roaming the city, while with evil mind  
Bad herdsmen waste the flocks which thou hast left behind.”

## 33

Then did Melanthius the goatherd say :  
“ O Gods, to hear how the vile dog doth prate !  
Whom I from Ithaca will bear some day  
Far over seas, a very goodly freight,  
To win me by his sale a huge estate.  
O that Apollo from his silver bow,  
He or the suitors, ere the day wax late,  
Would deal Telemachus a deadly blow  
So surely as Odysseus no return shall know !”

## 34

He spake, and left them slowly pacing on.  
He to the suitors came with hurrying feet,  
And, fronting bold Eurymachus, sat down,  
Whom most he loved. The servants gave him meat,  
And the staid house-dame brought him bread to eat.  
And lo, the swineherd and his lord drew near,  
And paused in entering ; such a music sweet  
All round them of the harp, while Phemius there  
Amid the suitors sang, came pealing through the air.

## 35

Clasped he the swineherd's hand, and him addressed :  
“ Thy lord's house easy to be known doth shine,  
Pile after pile, each diverse from the rest.  
Mark now the long wall with its gleaming line  
Of cornice, and the doors with skill divine  
How firmly wrought ! No spoiler need he fear.  
Filled is the house with feast and flowing wine ;  
For the steam riseth, and the harp I hear,  
Which even the gods have made companion of good cheer.”

## 36

Swineherd Eumæus, thou didst answering say :  
“ Wise art thou ever ; thou hast fairly guessed.  
But let us now within our spirits weigh  
How we shall enter, and which plan were best.  
Either do thou go first, and let me rest  
Here for a while, or I will go before  
And thou shalt wait ; but spare to linger, lest  
Some one remark thee tarrying near the door,  
And hurl at thee, or strike. I bid thee think it o'er.”

## 37

And to the noble swineherd answered he :  
“ I hear, I know ; go first, and I will wait.  
Nor blows nor hurlings come amiss to me,  
Patient in soul, and versed in sufferings great  
By wave and war—set this too in my fate !  
Easy are all things, save in check to keep  
The belly, cause of such a wondrous weight  
Of ills. For this men harness on the deep  
Ships, and all kinds of evil on their foemen heap.”

## 38

Such things they twain in mutual converse said,  
While in the court they lingered at the door.  
And the dog Argus raised his ears and head,  
Whom the much-toiled Odysseus long before  
Reared with his own hand, but enjoyed no more.  
Ere the time came, he passed to sacred Troy.  
There lay the dog—whom in the days of yore  
Oft did the young men in the chase employ,  
Hares and the flying deer and wild goats to destroy.

## 39

Cast out nor cared for by his master's hand,  
 On dung of mules and kine, which there did stay  
 Heaped till the servants should manure the land,  
 Swarming with vermin the dog Argus lay ;  
 Who, when he marked Odysseus in the way,  
 And could no longer to his lord come near,  
 Fawned with his tail, and drooped in feeble play  
 His ears. Odysseus turning wiped a tear,  
 Hid from the noble swineherd, and made question there :

## 40

"Surely, Eumæus, it is passing strange  
 That here this dog should on the dunghill lie.  
 He for his beauty seemeth fit to range  
 Both field and forest ; but this know not I,  
 Whether his fleetness with his form may vie,  
 Or he the nature of those dogs partake  
 Nursed at the table of some chieftain high,  
 And men preserve them for their beauty's sake."  
 Then, O Eumæus swineherd, thou didst answer make :

## 41

"He to a master that hath died afar  
 Pertaineth. Were he what in years of old  
 Odysseus left him, when he went to war,  
 Thou shouldst amazed his strength and speed behold.  
 No creature whom the forest-deeps enfold  
 Escaped the prowess of his youthful prime,  
 In track so true, and in pursuit so bold.  
 Now hath he fallen on an evil time,  
 And his dear lord hath perished in a far-off clime.

## 42

“Nor on his wants the careless women tend ;  
For servants, when their lords no longer sway,  
Their minds no more to righteous courses bend.  
Half that man’s virtue doth Zeus take away,  
Whom he surrenders to the servile day.”

He, having spoken, to the doors came near,  
And to the hall of banquet bent his way.

And upon Argus came the death-fate drear,  
Just having seen Odysseus in the twentieth year.

## 43

God-like Telemachus, the first of all,  
The swineherd there remarked as he came on,  
And to his side with beckoning brows did call.

He, glancing round, perceived a chair anon,  
Set for the carver who, reclined thereon,  
Carved for the suitors as they list to eat.

This to the table of Odysseus’ son

He carried, and before it took his seat.

There with all speed the herald gave him bread and meat.

## 44

A little after him Odysseus came,

With feeble feet, his firm staff leaning o’er,

Like to a poor old man whom all men shame,

With rags for raiment, and within the door

Crouched down upon the ashen threshold floor,

Lone in the revel, and did there recline

Against the cypress column, which of yore

Framed the shrewd craftsman with a skill divine,

Rounding it rarely well, and swerveless to the line.



## 45

Telemachus the swineherd then bespake,  
 While from the beauteous basket bread and meat  
 He lifted, all that his two hands could take :  
 " Give now the stranger this, that he may eat.  
 Bid him go round and every guest entreat ;  
 For needy men must gather where they can ;  
 Shame is no comrade for the poor, I weet."  
 Thus did he speak. The swineherd to the man  
 Made haste, and standing near in wingèd words began :

## 46

" Telemachus, O stranger, bread and meat  
 By me doth send thee, and, to gain new store,  
 Bids thee go round and every guest entreat.  
 Shame is, he says, no comrade for the poor."  
 He, crouched aloof upon the threshold floor,  
 Answered and spake : " O Zeus, eternal king,  
 Bless thou Telemachus for evermore  
 Past all men on the earth ; and everything,  
 Whate'er his heart desires, I pray thee to him bring !"

## 47

Then, with both hands receiving, at his feet  
 Piled on the scrip those fragments of the feast,  
 And there, while yet the minstrel sang, did eat.  
 When he had eaten, and the music ceased,  
 And through the hall the suitors' noise increased,  
 Near to Laertiades Odysseus stood  
 Athene, and the greatest and the least  
 Urged him to test, as he went round for food,  
 And in his mind mark well the evil and the good.

## 48

Not that at all she meant in the last fight  
 To shield from vengeance any suitor there.  
 He then among them moved from left to right,  
 With outstretched fingers, and to each made prayer,  
 As if a beggar from of old he were.  
 Him ever as he went they wondering scan,  
 And give for pity what they find to spare,  
 Asking "who is he?" and "whence came the man?"  
 Till with these words Melanthius in the midst began :

## 49

"O suitors of our noble queen, give ear  
 And hear me! I have seen the man before,  
 This stranger: 'twas the swineherd brought him here;  
 But him I knew not, nor what name he bore."  
 Antinous turning jeered the swineherd sore:  
 "And why, notorious swineherd, didst thou lead  
 Such hungry caitiff to thy master's door?  
 Find we not vagabonds enough to feed,  
 Beggars, the bane of feasts, and very wolves for greed?"

## 50

"Hast thou the boldness to rebuke our sin,  
 While in these halls assembling day by day  
 Thy lord we spoil, and hast thyself called in  
 Even this gorgier to devour the prey?"  
 Swineherd Eumæus, thou didst answering say:  
 "O brave Antinous, it becomes not well  
 One of thy virtue with vain words to play.  
 Who goes about new strangers to compel  
 Into a house, save those who in some craft excel,

## 51

"Framer of spears, leech, seer, or bard divine,  
 Who with his singing may the heart enthrall?  
 These do all mortals serve with food and wine  
 Through the wide earth, and to their houses call.  
 None asks the poor man, his own soul to gall.  
 But thou hast ever been the chief to hate  
 Odysseus' servants, and me more than all,  
 Who still thy wrath at little value rate,  
 While with her godlike son the queen lives in the gate."

## 52

To him made answer wise Telemachus :  
 "I pray thee, cease, and from much talk forbear.  
 Answer him not—for aye Antinous  
 Doth in his own heart bitter words prepare,  
 And all the rest leads on, the like to dare."  
 Then, turning to Antinous, spake : "O friend,  
 For me thou feelest quite a father's care,  
 Who in thy wrath wouldst by compulsion send  
 The stranger from my hearth. May God the shame forefend !

## 53

"Give, for I grudge not that the poor partake.  
 Let not to thee such offering seem amiss,  
 Or for my mother's or the household's sake.  
 But in thy breast are other thoughts, I wis.  
 Not to bestow, but eat, is all thy bliss."  
 Antinous answering jeered him to his face :  
 "Vauntful Telemachus, what word is this?  
 Should all these suitors yield him equal grace,  
 Soon were the house delivered for a three months' space !"

## 54

Him thus Antinous answered, and anon  
 Held up the footstool, which his shining feet  
 There mid the revel were reclining on.  
 But all the others gave both corn and meat,  
 And filled the poor man's wallet. To his seat,  
 Lone on the ashen sill, Odysseus then  
 Held purpose in his heart back to retreat,  
 And taste the dole of the Achaian men ;  
 But to Antinous first with these words turned agen :

## 55

“ Thou too, O friend, contribute some good thing ;  
 For not the meanest of Achaians here  
 I hold thee, but the best, and like a king.  
 If but thy spirit in thy form appear,  
 Thou shouldst afford me even nobler cheer,  
 And through the wide earth I would spread thy fame.  
 Once to me also sorrow came not near,  
 And I had riches and a noble name,  
 And to the wandering poor still gave, whoever came.

## 56

“ Legions of slaves and many thousand things  
 I held, which God doth on the great bestow—  
 All that the ownership of large wealth brings.  
 But Zeus Kronion, for he willed it so,  
 Emptied my power and sent a wave of woe,  
 And to Ægyptus me at last was fain  
 To urge in swift ships from that land to go  
 With pirates, rovers of the wasteful main,  
 A long dark weary way, a way of doom and pain.

## 57

“ When in Ægyptus stream at length we lay,  
I in the flowing river the barks did moor,  
Nor my companions suffered thence to stray,  
But charged them keep close sentry on the shore,  
While some go forth, and from the heights explore  
The country. These to their own lusts give rein,  
And, yielding to the fire within them, pour  
Bale on the homesteads, and lay waste the plain,  
Take wives and children captive, and the men leave slain.

## 58

“ Soon in the city a wild cry was heard,  
And footmen, chariots, and a glint of steel  
Filled the wide champaign when the dawn appeared.  
Then from the onset of their fiery zeal  
Zeus, lord of thunder, made our warriors reel ;  
Hemmed in with evil through the plain they fled,  
And the foe following did fierce vengeance deal.  
Most by the sword fell, some were captive led,  
Doomed in despite to labour and eat servile bread.

## 59

“ They conquering dealt with my companions thus,  
But me, for Cyprus, to their guest-friend gave,  
Even to Dmetor, child of Iasus,  
Who met them : he beyond the rolling wave  
Ruled Cyprus isle : and I became his slave.  
Thence have I now come hither, sorely pressed  
With evil, and your pitying help I crave.  
Give me a little food, and let me rest ! ”  
But him the lord Antinous answering thus addressed :

## 60

“Curse on thee, wretch, who dost our feast defile!  
Stand from my table, lest thou chance to find  
Sharp Egypt and a bitter Cyprus isle.  
Soothly thou art to no weak shame inclined,  
But for a beggar hast a brazen mind.  
Thou, standing near, dost still to each appeal,  
And much they give thee, very idly kind.  
Light is their reckoning, no remorse they feel,  
Food not their own to lavish from so brave a meal.”

## 61

Backward Odysseus stept, and thus replied:  
“Thy mind and body are of diverse make.  
Scarce from thine own house wouldst thou salt provide  
For suppliants, who for me no bread wilt break  
Where ye rich feast at others' cost partake.”  
He ceased. Antinous, wrung with wrath, apace  
Turned on him scowling, and in winged words spake:  
“Now shalt thou not go scatheless to thy place,  
Since thou dost speak vain words, and beard me to my face.”

## 62

So did he speak, and, in his foolish heart  
Conceiving fury, he the stool uptore,  
And smote him near the spine's extremest part,  
On the right shoulder. He the great blow bore  
Firm as a rock, and on the palace-floor  
Blenched not at all, but silent waved his head,  
And brooded evil things; then to the door  
Passed, carrying in his hands the meat and bread;  
There the full scrip laid down, and to the suitors said:

## 63

“ Hear me, ye suitors of the queen divine !  
 Men grieve not for the wounds they take in fight,  
 Defending their own wealth, white sheep or kine ;  
 But me (bear witness !) doth Antinous smite  
 Only because I suffer hunger’s bite,  
 Fount to mankind of evils evermore.  
 Now may Antinous, ere his nuptial night,  
 If there be gods and furies of the poor,  
 Die unavenged, unwept, upon the palace-floor !”

## 64

Answered the proud Antinous : “ Sit and eat  
 In peace, O stranger, or with speed begone,  
 Lest the men drag thee by the hands and feet,  
 And strip thy flesh, and peel thee to the bone,  
 So dire a word thy caitiff lips hath flown.”  
 Thus did he speak, and all exceedingly  
 Disdained the fierce wrong to the poor man shown ;  
 And, while the murmur of their wrath grew high,  
 One of the haughty youths did in these words reply :

## 65

“ Not to thine honour hast thou now let fall,  
 Antinous, on the wandering poor this blow.  
 Haply a god from heaven is in our hall,  
 And thou art ripe for ruin : I bid thee know,  
 Gods in the garb of strangers to and fro  
 Wander the cities, and men’s ways discern ;  
 Yea, through the wide earth in all shapes they go,  
 Changed, yet the same, and with their own eyes learn  
 How live the sacred laws, who hold them, and who spurn.”

## 66

Thus spake the suitors. He within his heart  
Lightly regarded and not seemed to hear.  
Meanwhile Telemachus sat far apart,  
Feeding on fire ; and deeper and more drear  
Grew the sharp pang, that he saw stricken there  
His own dear father, and the flower of kings.  
Yet from his eyelids he let fall no tear,  
But, filled in soul with dark imaginings,  
Silently waved his head, and brooded evil things.

## 67

Now when the story of that blow she heard,  
Dealt in her own halls, wise Penelope  
Among her maidens spake this wingèd word :  
“ Archer Apollo deal the like to thee !”  
And answer made discreet Eurynome :  
“ If only on our prayers fulfilment fall,  
Not one of these the golden Dawn shall see.”  
Then spake the queen : “ Nurse, they are hateful all,  
All evil, but Antinous Death itself I call.

## 68

“ Comes a poor stranger through long wanderings led,  
Naked and cold and overwhelmed with woe,  
And in his hunger asks a little bread.  
Then all the others a sweet alms bestow,  
This with the footstool deals him a rude blow.”  
Thus then the queen among her maidens fair  
Talked, sitting in her chamber, while below  
Odysseus, eating his appointed share,  
Sat. She the swineherd calling thus addressed him there :



## 69

"Go, dear Eumæus, call the stranger-guest.  
 Fain would I see him and some tidings glean,  
 If of Odysseus, with long woe distressed,  
 Vague rumour he have heard, or something seen.  
 He seems like one who very far hath been."  
 Swineherd Eumæus, thou didst answering say :  
 "If the Achaians in thy hall, O queen,  
 Would but keep silence or go quite away,  
 Soon would thy heart rejoice, such news doth he convey.

## 70

"Three nights and days I entertained him well ;  
 Escaping from a ship, me first he sought ;  
 Nor hath he yet ceased all his woes to tell.  
 Even as when a bard, divinely taught,  
 Singeth a lovely lay ; we, tranced in thought,  
 Gaze on him ever with a dreaming eye,  
 And to his voice, with melting music fraught,  
 Yearn as he singeth—even so was I  
 Tranced with his tale of sorrow, and sat yearning by.

## 71

"In wide Crete, where the race of Minos dwells,  
 He lives, and boasts him from an ancient date  
 Odysseus' guest-friend ; such the tale he tells.  
 Thence he comes hither in forlorn estate,  
 Roaming and roaming with a weary weight  
 Of sorrow, and to this doth firmly stand :  
 That of Odysseus he hath heard of late,  
 Not far off, in the rich Thesprotian land,  
 Alive ; and much wealth brings he to his native strand."

## 72

Answered the wise Penelope in turn :

“Go, call him with all speed, that face to face

I may converse with him and tidings learn.

And let these sitting urge their sports apace

There in the court, or even in this place.

Well may their soul to all sweet joys incline,

Who live light-hearted in such happy case.

Us they consume, but their own corn and wine

Lie in the house unscathed, whereon their servants dine.

## 73

“Yes, to our house resorting day by day,

They kill fat beeves and many goats and sheep,

Drink up the dark wine, as in wanton play,

And squander all our wealth in one fell heap.

For no Odysseus now is left to keep

Destruction from our doors, and ward off wrong.

Could but Odysseus from beyond the deep

Stand on his own earth, with his child ere long

He would in wrath wipe out their violence deep and strong!”

## 74

So said she ; and Telemachus sneezed aloud.

Direly the house rang, and Penelope

Laughed to Eumæus : “Call him from the crowd

Right quickly, for my son (dost thou not see?)

On all my words hath sneezed right favourably.

Fate shall come down on every suitor there ;

None of their number the black Death shall flee.

But for this man—if he the truth declare,

Robe shall he have and tunic, brave apparel fair.”

## 75

Then went the swineherd near him and spake thus:  
“ Father, Penelope the prudent queen  
Doth call thee, mother of Telemachus.  
Fain would she of her lord some tidings glean,  
If something thou hast heard or haply seen.  
And she will grant, if thou the truth declare,  
Robe and rich tunic—which right sore, I ween,  
Thou needest—and among the folk to fare,  
And beg from house to house, thy ravin to repair.”

## 76

And answering spake divine Odysseus thus :  
“ Now, O Eumæus, soon enough might she  
Hear of her husband, if alone with us,  
Icarius' daughter, wise Penelope.  
All the main history is known to me,  
And we are old companions, he and I,  
In sorrow ; but these suitors—one may see  
How fierce they are. I shudder to pass by  
Men whose enormous outrage climbs the iron sky.

## 77

“ For lo, just now, when I was passing on,  
Nor any harm had wrought, to my deep woe  
That man did smite me ; nor would any one,  
Not even Telemachus, avenge the blow.  
Bid then Penelope the tale forego  
Till sunset, and then nearer to the fire  
Bring me, and ask what she is fain to know.  
For, bear me witness, in no warm attire  
I to thy hearth came suppliant, in mine anguish dire.”

## 78

Thus spake he, and that other, when he heard,  
 Forthwith departed and the chamber sought ;  
 And to him entering spake the queen this word :  
 “ How then, Eumæus ? Is the man not brought ?  
 What had the wandering stranger in his thought ?  
 Or feels he too much shame of their rude play,  
 And lest men not revere him as they ought ?  
 Shame comes not often in a vagrant’s way.”  
 Thou, O Eumæus swineherd, didst in answer say :

## 79

“ Justly he speaks, the word can none gainsay,  
 Fearing the suitors who dire insult mean.  
 He bids thee tarry till the fall of day ;  
 And for thyself ’twere better far, O queen,  
 Alone these tidings from thy guest to glean.”  
 Answered in turn the wise Penelope :  
 “ Now doth the stranger little err, I ween,  
 To shun these suitors, whosoe’er he be.  
 None on the wide earth live who deal so furiously.”

## 80

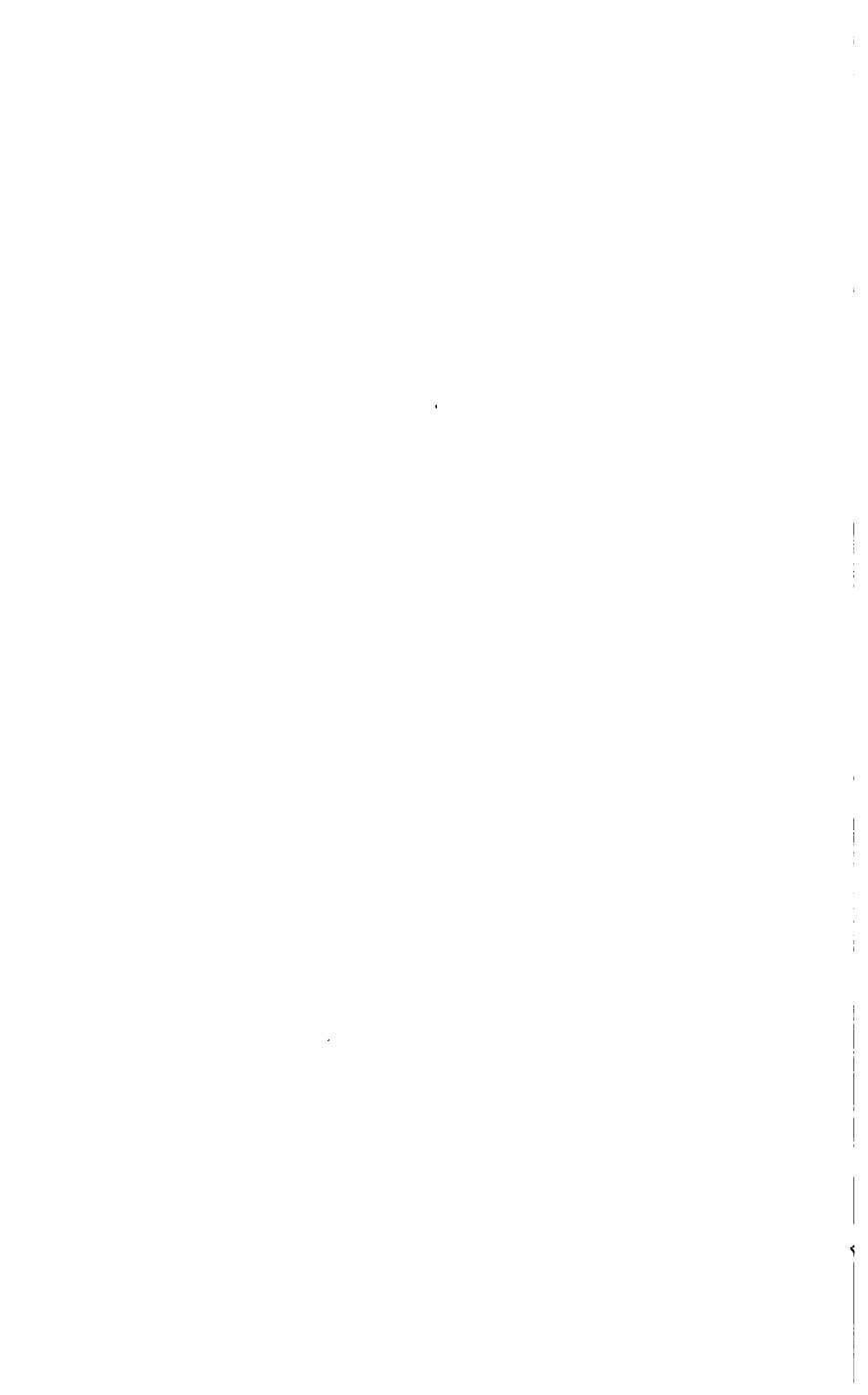
Then to the hall of banquet made repair  
 The swineherd, and addressed the prince divine,  
 Holding his head down lest the others hear :  
 “ Now, friend, will I go hence to guard the swine,  
 And all things else that make my life and thine.  
 But here look thou to thine own business still ;  
 Save thyself first, and see that no sad tyne  
 Thou suffer—many in their minds think ill,  
 Whom Zeus, ere yet they work our own destruction, kill !”

81

To whom the wise Telemachus replied :  
" So let it be, good father. Thou at eve  
Go, and fair victims with the dawn provide.  
The rest to me and the immortals leave."  
So did he speak and to the board receive  
Eumæus, who good cheer of food and wine  
Enjoyed, and passed forth to his swine at eve  
Far from the feasters. They their hearts incline,  
While the day wanes, to music and the dance divine.

# BOOK XVIII.

ODYSSEUS FIGHTS WITH THE BEGGAR IRUS—THE WARNING  
OF AMPHINOMUS.



## BOOK XVIII.

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1

AND lo, a public beggar of old fame,  
One bulk of belly, valiant on the earth  
In strength of swallowing, from the city came,  
Not firm of sinew, but an ox for girth,  
Arnæus ; such the name he bore from birth ;  
Now, trained for errands at each beck and call,  
Dubbed by the young men Irus in their mirth.  
He then, to drive the king from his own hall,  
Came near, and scorning spake, and wingèd words let fall :

2

“ Give place, old man, and from the door-sill go,  
Lest I soon hale thee forth by hands and feet.  
E'en now the young men—look around and know—  
Give me the wink : but 'twere a shame, I weet.  
Up and begone then, ere of blows we treat !”  
But him Odysseus sternly eyed, and said :  
“ Friend, nor in word nor deed I wrong thee. Eat,  
Till thou be loaded with their meat and bread !  
I grudge not : go thy ways, and let me too be fed.



## 3

“ Here on the sill is room for both, since thou  
 Dost seem to be a beggar even as I ;  
 And both with good cheer can the gods endow.  
 But keep thy hands off, nor my wrath defy,  
 Lest with red blood thy lips and chest I dye,  
 Old as I am : so shall I find less brawl  
 To-morrow, nor again shalt thou come by  
 To seek Laértiades Odysseus’ hall.”

Then did the beggar Irus in loud anger call :

## 4

“ Ye gods, how glibly doth this gorger scold,  
 Like hags o’ the furnace ! I will deal him now  
 Such rattling blows upon his numskull old,  
 Till all his teeth he shed like a wild sow  
 Caught pilfering in the corn. Come, show them how  
 Old men can hit, if thou hast nerve to fight !”  
 Thus by the doors they twain with darkling brow  
 Stood wrangling. And Antinous the good sight  
 Caught first, and sweetly laughed, and did the rest invite :

## 5

“ O friends, was never such good pastime seen  
 As now the gods into this mansion bring.  
 Here are two varlets at high war, I ween,  
 With fists. Come quickly, let us form a ring !”  
 He spake : with loud laugh from the benches spring  
 The suitors, rush together from the hall,  
 And round the ill-clad vagrants form a ring.  
 But brave Antinous, ere to fight they fall,  
 Son of Eupeithes, first outspake among them all :

## 6

“Hearken, ye noble suitors, what I say!  
Here at the fire the rich goat-paunches fry,  
Which for our supper we have laid away,  
Filled with the fat and blood. Let these men ply  
Their combat; and who wins the victory  
Let him select the best paunch of them all,  
And feast for ever in our company  
Hereafter; and him only will we call  
True vagrant, and allow to beg here in the hall.”

## 7

Thus spake Antinous, and the rest assent.  
Then said Odysseus in his wary wit:  
“O friends, a poor old man, with sorrow spent,  
Scarce with the young may fight; yet, sorely bit  
By rage of hunger, I perforce submit.  
But swear me a great oath that no one here  
Irus will favour and me foully hit  
While fighting, nor with rough hands interfere  
To make me yet worse off than I must needs appear.”

## 8

So spake he, and they all against it swore.  
And him divine Telemachus addressed:  
“Friend, if thy heart and soul constrain thee sore  
To fight with Irus, never heed the rest.  
For whoso to thy harm shall thee molest,  
Not thee alone assails, but many of *us*.  
Mine is the house, and these approve my hest.  
Antinous chiefly, and Eurymachus,  
Both lovers of the right, will help me to deal thus.”

## 9

So spake he, and they all assented fain.  
But with his mighty hands Odysseus there  
Girded the rags about his loins amain,  
And the firm thighs and stalwart arms laid bare,  
And breast and shoulders very broad and fair.  
For, unbeheld, Athene standing by  
Moulded his kingly limbs beyond compare,  
And spread them ampler in the people's eye,  
That all who looked thereon wondered exceedingly.

## 10

And one toward another looked, and said :  
" Full soon will Irus be dis-Irused quite  
With plague which he hath pulled on his own head,  
Such wondrous thews the old man brings to light."  
Thus they : but Irus filled with sore affright  
Slunk cowering, and the slaves with hurrying hand  
Gird him perforce, and thrust him on to fight,  
While his flesh trembles that he scarce can stand.  
Whom proud Antinous then with bitter words did brand :

## 11

" Now die, vile braggart, if thou fear to face  
A poor old wretch with many woes opprest,  
And shrink and shudder to thy fell disgrace.  
Hark ! if in fighting the old man prove best,  
Off to king Echetus, I here protest,  
Who all that seek him with cold iron shears,  
I'll send thee howling overseas, his guest.  
He with the knife will geld thee when he hears,  
And to the dogs cast raw thy severed nose and ears."

## 12

He ended ; and a yet more trembling fear  
Seized on the limbs of Irus. Him they thrust  
Sick to the fight : both men their fists uprear.  
Then brave Odysseus in his soul discussed,  
Whether to beat him to the bloody dust  
Dead, or to strike him with a softer blow  
Prone, yet alive, the scorn and fell disgust  
Of all men. At the last seemed wiser so—  
Softly to strike, lest him too soon the Achaians know.

## 13

They standing, Irus smote Odysseus there  
On the right shoulder. He with a dire clang  
Smote Irus on the neck, beneath the ear,  
And crashed the splintering bone. Out the blood sprang  
Red from the mouth in jets, and the earth rang  
Loud to the ruining mass. He writhingly  
Kicked in convulsion, and with hideous pang  
Gnashed his teeth, moaning ever ; and standing by  
The suitors raised their hands, and laughed as they would die.

## 14

Him through the vestibule Odysseus drew  
Forth to the courtyard by the heel, and there  
Propped him against the wall in public view,  
And planted in his hands a staff to bear,  
And did aloud in wingèd words declare :  
“ Sit, pitiful that thou art, and learn to keep  
Dogs from the doors and swine, nor henceforth dare  
O'er men to lord it, and foul insults heap  
On strangers and the poor, lest a worse thing thou reap.”

## 15

He then the foul scrip on his shoulders cast,  
 Torn, leathern-looped, and by the door reclined.  
 And all the suitors, as they entering passed,  
 Laughed sweetly, cheering him with accents kind :  
 " Zeus and the gods whatever in thy mind  
 Thou list, O stranger, at thy choice dispose !  
 Since yonder cormorant his last hath dined  
 At public charge. To Echetus he goes  
 Straight, who of each new-comer crops the ears and nose."

## 16

Thus did they cheer him, and the noble king  
 Joyed in the omen from the suitors won.  
 Then went Antinous from the fire to bring  
 Of the goat-paunches even the choicest one,  
 Filled with rich fat, and near him laid it down.  
 Amphinomus two loaves brought speedily,  
 And with a golden cup him pledged anon :  
 " Hail, father guest, and may'st thou happy be  
 Hereafter in thy life, who now hast misery !"

## 17

And wary-wise Odysseus answering said :  
 " Amphinomus, thou seemest in my sight  
 Wise, worthy to be loved, and nobly bred.  
 Such was thy father, if I hear aright,  
 Dulichian Nisus, famed for wealth and might,  
 Whose glory wanders the wide earth. Men say  
 Thou from his loins thy lineage dost indite.  
 Thy words seem to have wisdom. Therefore lay  
 My speech to heart, nor voice of warning cast away.

## 18

“ Earth than a man no poorer feebler thing  
Rears, of all creatures that here breathe and move ;  
Who, while the gods lend health and his knees string,  
Boasts that no sorrow he is born to prove.  
But when the gods assail him from above,  
Then doth he bear it with a bitter mind,  
Dies without help or liveth against love.  
Thus are the souls of earth-born men inclined  
According to that state which by God’s will they find.

## 19

“ Once I myself was happy among men,  
And, led astray by power, much folly wrought,  
Since in my father and my brothers then  
I trusted, and of sorrow knew not aught.  
Wherefore let no man, no, not even in thought,  
Turn him to evil and do lawless things,  
Lest he through suffering at the last be taught !  
Zeus from on high doth visit even kings ;  
Therefore receive in silence what the Father brings.

## 20

“ But now the suitors I see firm for wrong,  
Who spoil the wealth, and hurt the wife of one  
Who (mark my words !) shall not be absent long ;  
Yea he is near you, and yet sees the sun.  
But thee may God steal homeward, and let shun  
That man, when he returns to his own land !  
Not without blood shall the dire cause be won,  
Wrath, and a noise of fightings hand to hand,  
If once within the halls upon the floor he stand.”

## 21

He ended, and the sweet drink-offering poured,  
 Quaffed what was over of the generous wine,  
 And to that prince the golden cup restored.  
 He, the head bowing, and with downcast eyen,  
 Went and again did in his place recline,  
 For in his soul he saw the evil day;  
 Nor even thus escaped the doom divine,  
 For that Athene on his neck did lay  
 This burden, that even him Telemachus should slay.

## 22

Stern-eyed Athene then inspired the queen  
 To go down and reveal the suitors' heart,  
 And her own virtue to make plainlier seen.  
 She, smiling heavily, did her thoughts impart :  
 " These men, Eurynome, oft make me smart  
 In spirit ; yet methinks I will descend  
 And plant a useful word in my child's heart—  
 Not on the suitors always to attend,  
 Who, though fair words they speak, mean evil in the end."

## 23

And the discreet Eurynome replied :  
 " Right well thy words, dear child, have hit the case.  
 Go now, declare it, nor this counsel hide.  
 Only first wash thee, and anoint thy face,  
 Lest on thy lovely cheeks men mark the trace  
 Of tears. It is not good always to moan.  
 For now thy child hath come to manly grace,  
 Thy prayers are answered and his beard hath grown."  
 To her the wise Penelope made speech anon :

## 24

“ Bid me not wash, nor yet anoint my face ;  
For now the gods that in Olympus be,  
Since with the hollow ships *he* sailed, erase  
All beauty from my brow. But send to me  
Hippodameia and Autonœ.  
Stand in the hall I dare not, from mere shame,  
Alone among the suitors.” Thus said she ;  
And through the wide hall passed the agèd dame,  
And with the tidings quickly to the maidens came.

## 25

And lo, Athene had new things in thought,  
And to Icarus' child sweet slumber bare,  
Loosened her limbs upon the couch, and brought  
Immortal gifts, to make her wondrous fair,  
And with ambrosia bathed her face and hair,  
Like Cytherea the bright-zoned, when she  
To the sweet choir of Graces makes repair.  
Larger the queen grew, more sublime to see,  
And whiter than the gleam of burnished ivory.

## 26

Thus having wrought, Athene went her way.  
And the white-armed attendants, with a sound  
Of voices, from the hall to where she lay  
Came ; and the queen awaking glanced around,  
Wiped her fair cheeks, and said : “ Sweet trance hath found  
Me sorrowing. O that Artemis would quell,  
This very hour, my life with a like swound !  
Never again to pine in anguish fell,  
Wailing a man who all the Achaians did excel.”



## 27

Then by the staircase to the lower ground  
 Passed the wise queen, but not alone went she ;  
 Two maidens followed. She the suitors found  
 At banquet, and beside the tall roof-tree  
 Paused in her shining veil, right fair to see,  
 A comely maiden standing on each side.  
 Charmed were the suitors ; love loosed every knee ;  
 Each that beheld desired her for his bride ;  
 And to her own dear son Telemachus she cried :

## 28

“ Telemachus, thy wit no more appears.  
 The child was wiser than the man. For thou,  
 Grown to full stature and complete in years,  
 So that one looking on thy form and brow  
 Would call thee child of a great chief, art now  
 Other than once we knew thee, and not wise.  
 See, to thy shame among all mortals, how  
 Rough men within thy halls the poor despise,  
 Sad from long toils, and thou hast seen it with thine eyes.”

## 29

He answered : “ O my mother, cause thou hast ;  
 But mine own heart the right and wrong can tell.  
 Once as a child I reasoned—that is past.  
 Yet can I not shape all things wisely well,  
 Since these ill-minded ones my purpose quell,  
 And make me wander ; for no help I find.  
 Yet in the fight but now, when Irus fell,  
 All chanced not wholly to the suitors' mind.  
 The stranger won ; but they far otherwise designed.

## 30

“ O father Zeus, Athene, and Apollo !  
I would these suitors, having seen the fight,  
Now were all destined a like doom to follow,  
And, with their limbs well loosened in our sight,  
Here in the house were nodding heads to-night,  
Or in the court, as yonder on the floor  
Irus sits nodding like a drunken wight,  
Nor on his feet can stand, nor quit the door,  
Homeward to pass, for now his limbs are loosened sore !”

## 31

Thus she addressed him, and he answered thus,  
But, when he heard them, to Penelope  
Spake in these words the bold Eurymachus :  
“ Icarus’ daughter, wise Penelope,  
Could all Achaians in wide Argos see  
How fair thou art, new feasters thou wouldst find  
Here in the morning, and far more than we ;  
Since in form, stature, and a prudent mind,  
Thou the whole sex of women leavest far behind.”

## 32

Answered to him the sage Penelope :  
“ Eurymachus, my beauty, form, and grace  
The high gods ruined from that hour when he,  
My husband, went forth with the Argive race  
To Ilion. Could he but once more embrace  
And tend me, then should I for this loss gain  
A fame far better than the fairest face.  
Now am I straitened and bowed down with pain,  
And on my life the gods much evil pour amain.

## 33

“ Well I remember, when he went away,  
He clasped my right hand by the wrist, and said :  
‘ Not all the Argives that wear arms to-day,  
Dear wife, believe me shall from Troy be led  
Safe homeward ; but the many shall lie dead.  
They say the Trojans are all warriors tried,  
Hurlers of javelins, and bowmen dread,  
And riders of swift steeds, that far and wide  
Swerves of the rolling battle very soon decide.

## 34

“ ‘ Therefore I know not whether God will spare  
My life, or whether I in Troy shall fall.  
But thou of all things in my stead take care,  
And even as now, whatever fate befall,  
My father and my mother in our hall  
Remember—and yet more when I am gone.  
And when thy son thou seest bearded, tall,  
Wed whom thou wilt, and leave him here alone.’  
Thus did he speak, and now these things are almost done.

## 35

“ Yet shall that hour wherein the nuptial rite  
Falls on me, from whom Zeus hath taken away  
All joys for ever, be the hour of night ;  
Nor let it see the dawns of the day !  
But now this sorrow on my soul ye lay.  
Suitors of noble women in time of old  
Themselves brought oxen and fat sheep to slay,  
Feasted the maiden’s friends, gave gifts of gold—  
Ye, while my house ye spoil, your own things firmly hold.”

## 36

Thus did she speak, and her much-suffering lord  
Joyed that she drew their presents, and entwined  
Their heart in snares of many a soothing word,  
While her own breast far other thoughts designed.  
Then said Antinous : “ O queen, wise of mind,  
What gift soever any list impart,  
Take—it is ill to leave a gift behind.  
Yet will we never from thy halls depart,  
Ere from our best thou wed one pleasing thine own heart.”

## 37

Thereto accordant for the gifts each sent  
His herald. One to brave Antinous brought  
A pictured robe, ample, magnificent,  
Where curven clasps in linkèd lustre caught  
Twelve golden brooches, very richly wrought.  
One to the lord Eurymachus anon  
Carried a chain of virgin gold, and fraught  
With quaint devices fair to look upon,  
Set with electron stars, and radiant like the sun.

## 38

Brought to Eurydamas two slaves anon  
Earrings, each dropt with triple brilliants fair.  
Came from Peisander's house, Polyctor's son,  
Necklace of gems exceeding rich and rare.  
Came a bright gift from each Achaian there.  
She, flower of women, with her maidens went,  
And to her chamber the rich presents bare.  
They to the dance and song their spirits bent,  
Till on their pastime came the evening's black descent.

## 39

Anon three fire-racks in the halls they set  
 To give light, and the logs all round bestow,  
 Sapless long since and dead, for burning fit,  
 New-cloven with sharp iron ; and a row  
 Of torches add, which through the wide hall glow.  
 By turns the maidens of Odysseus fare  
 Down the long tumult of the feast, and throw  
 Logs on the fires, and make the torches flare.  
 And the divine Odysseus spake among them there :

## 40

“ Slaves of Odysseus, the long-absent king,  
 Hearken and hear me ! To the chamber hie,  
 Wherein the gracious queen sits sorrowing,  
 And, sitting round, amuse her while ye ply  
 The distaff, or the soft wool card : and I  
 Here in your place will on the lamps attend.  
 For, though they list to linger till the sky  
 Grows red with morning, they will never bend  
 My strength nor heart, well-versed in labours without end.”

## 41

So spake he, and the damsels laughed to hear,  
 While each to other glanced. And bitterly  
 Him did the fair-faced child of Dolius jeer,  
 Melanthe, whom the queen Penelope  
 With fond endearments brought up tenderly  
 Even as her own child ; yet in all the pain  
 Of queen Penelope no whit grieved she,  
 But with Eurymachus in love's sweet chain  
 Mingled. Odysseus now she jeered in fell disdain :

## 42

“Man, thou art mad! go seek the forge, or sleep  
In some low haunt, nor linger prating here.  
Hast thou no shame? or doth much wine o'erleap  
Thy beggarly wit, and make thee proof to fear,  
So loud thou art? or is thy brain not clear  
For pride that thou has beaten a poor clown?  
I warn thee—lest a better soon appear  
Than Irus, and stave in thy caitiff crown, [down.”  
And hunt thee from the doors, thy red blood streaming

## 43

Answered Odysseus with a scowling brow:  
“Wench, I will tell Telemachus what you say,  
Who limb from limb will carve you even now.”  
So did he speak, and scared them all away,  
Nerveless with terror; “for he means” said they  
“To keep his word.” He to the fire-racks passed  
And torches, and fed well their burning ray,  
On each attentive; but in soul forecast  
Far other heavier things—not unfulfilled at last.

## 44

Hardened Athene then the suitors' heart  
That they might go from sin to sin, and make  
Soul of Laertiades Odysseus smart  
Yet deeper. And Eurymachus thus spake,  
While in his laughter all the rest partake:  
“Hear me, O friends, while I my thought declare!  
Not without God came hither for our sake  
This baldhead, who outshineth the whole glare  
Of torchlight: his old pate grows never a tuft of hair.”

## 45

He spake, and turned him to the warlike sire :  
 " Friend, are you willing on my farm to try  
 Work—if I take you at sufficient hire—  
 Cull stones for fences, and plant trees ? For I  
 All the year round will feed you, and supply  
 Good raiment at your need, and sandals stout.  
 But thou, I know it, of all work art shy,  
 And liefer through the town wouldst cringe about  
 And get the wherewithal thy belly to bulge out."

## 46

But he : " Eurymachus, I would we twain  
 In the spring-season, when the days are long,  
 Each with a well-curved scythe might strive amain,  
 Fasting till even, where the grass grew long—  
 Or there were oxen fiery-eyed and strong,  
 Both filled with pasture, of like strength to bear,  
 Hard to be tired, both fearless, and both young,  
 The ground four acres, and a sliding share—  
 Soon should you see if I the furrow can cleave fair.

## 47

" Or should Kronion stir up war to-day,  
 And lend me helm and shield and javelins twain,  
 Then should you mark me in the foremost fray,  
 Nor chide my belly in such scorning strain.  
 Great man thou seemest, and a rude disdain  
 Art carrying among paltry men and few ;  
 But, were Odysseus to come home again,  
 Soon would the wide space of these doors to you  
 Seem in the huddling flight too narrow to squeeze through."

## 48

He ceased. Eurymachus in wrath more deep  
Raged, and with glowering eyes addressed him there :  
“ Hast thou no shame ? or doth much wine o'erleap  
Thy beggarly wit, and make thee proof to fear,  
Tongue-valiant dog ? or is thy brain not clear,  
For pride that thou hast beaten a poor clown ?  
Look to thyself, lest direr foe come near  
Than Irus, and stave in thy caitiff crown.  
Now for the things thou sayest full price will I pay down.”

## 49

Seized he the footstool, and the king divine  
Crouched at Amphinomus' knees : the stool flew by,  
Hit the cupbearer's wrist, and spilt the wine.  
Rang the bowl falling. He with a sharp cry  
Fell backward in the dust, and there did lie  
Writhing. And one spake mid the suitors' din :  
“ Would God the vagrant had been doomed to die,  
Ere to our hall he brought this tumult in !  
Joy from the feast hath fled, and all the worse things win.”

## 50

Spake in the midst Odysseus' noble son :  
“ Sirs, ye are maddened with much food and wine.  
Some god inflames you. Since the feast is done,  
Go where ye list, and in your homes recline ;  
For to expel you is no task of mine.”  
He ended ; but the rest in wrath did bite  
Their lips, and wondered at the prince divine ;  
Such words he uttered in his royal right.  
Up rose Amphinomus then, and did these words indite :



## 51

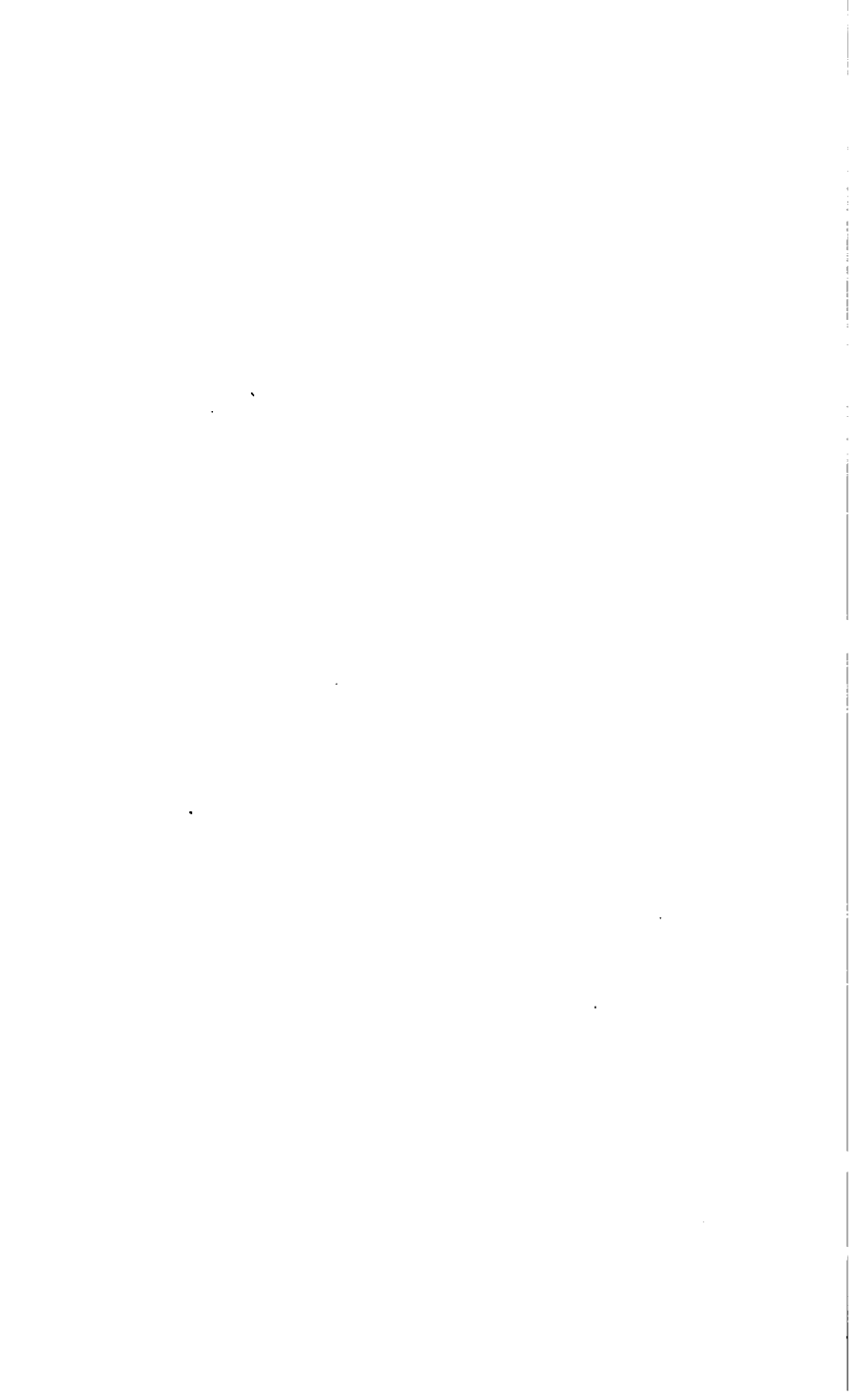
“Friends, when a man hath said a righteous thing,  
One would not scorn it with a cutting jeer.  
Ye then abuse not, nor with insult sting,  
This guest nor any of the servants here.  
But let the herald, who the wine doth bear,  
Go with the cups his round, that we may pour  
Libations, and at home find slumbers dear.  
And to Telemachus this stranger poor  
Leave ; for the man first came a suppliant to his door.”

## 52

He ended, and all gave consent thereto.  
And hero Mulus the bowl then bare,  
Dulichian herald, of the retinue  
Of lord Amphinomus, king Nisus' heir.  
He to them all the wine presented there.  
They to the gods pour forth libations sweet,  
Drink to their hearts' content, and quickly fare  
Forth from the palace, filled with wine and meat ;  
And each to his own house for slumber makes retreat.

## BOOK XIX.

THE INTERVIEW OF ODYSSEUS WITH PENELOPE—EURYCLEIA'S  
RECOGNITION OF ODYSSEUS—THE DREAM OF PENELOPE.



## BOOK XIX.

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### 1

THEN was divine Odysseus left alone.  
He, musing by Athene's help apart  
Death to the suitors, thus addressed his son :  
" This thought, Telemachus, invades my heart.  
Let us delay not with sword, shield, and dart,  
And every warlike weapon in our hall,  
Now that the feast is ended, to depart,  
And in the chamber to bestow them all  
Far out of reach, in safety, till occasion call.

### 2

" And, when the suitors miss them, softly thou  
Beguile them from the mark, and answering say :  
' Out of the smoke I laid them, since not now  
Like to those arms they seem in olden day  
Left by Odysseus when he sailed away,  
But smirched with fire : and Zeus a dread not light  
Hath given me, lest through wine ye stir a fray,  
And shame the feast, and mar with foul despite  
Your courtship : steel itself oft lures a man to fight.' "

## 3

He ended ; and the sage Telemachus  
Obedied his father, called the nurse, and spake :  
“ Shut up the women, nurse, apart from us,  
While to the chamber from the hall I take  
My father’s arms, which fiery vapours make  
Dimmed of their lustre : for behold they lie  
Cared for by no one for my father’s sake  
All the long years—and a mere child was I.  
Now, where the smoke comes never, I long to lay them by.”

## 4

And unto him the nurse made answer there :  
“ Ah ! could I see thee learning thrift at last,  
Dear child, and of thine own house taking care,  
Now that thy years of childhood are quite past !  
But say, if all the women be shut fast,  
Who will go with thee and the light convey ?  
These thou forbiddest, but none else thou hast.”  
Quoth he : “ This stranger. I will let none stay  
Unworked, who breaks my bread, albeit from far away.”

## 5

He spake, and wingless in her spirit stayed  
The word ; and she made fast the doors anon,  
And all things ordered as her master bade.  
And brave Odysseus and his noble son  
Quickly arose, and every weapon won,  
Helmet and bossy shield and pointed spear.  
Pallas Athene in the front moved on,  
And held a golden cresset shining clear.  
Telemachus called wondering to his father dear :

## 6

“ Father, a strange thing with mine eyes I see.  
Look, the columnar spaces on the wall,  
Cornice and ceiling and the fair roof-tree,  
The beams of pinewood, and the pillars tall,  
Burn like the blaze of fire along the hall !  
Some god is with us, who on high doth reign.”  
To whom Odysseus : “ Hush, speak not at all !  
Forbear from asking, and thy soul refrain.  
Often the gods deal thus, who in Olympus reign.

## 7

“ Go thou, and sleep ; but leave me in the hall,  
Thy mother and her maidens to incite,  
And make her ask me severally of all,  
Though grieving.” He, led by the flaming light  
Of torches, sought his chamber, where each night  
He slumbered from of old, and there lay down  
To rest, and waited for the morning bright.  
Meanwhile divine Odysseus, left alone,  
Mused by Athene’s help how victory might be won.

## 8

Then like to Artemis descending passed,  
Or golden Aphrodite, the sage queen.  
Quickly her chair beside the fire they placed,  
Rich work, of ivory turned and silver sheen,  
Framed by Icmalius ; and beneath was seen,  
By the skilled artist grafted on the chair,  
A beauteous shelf, whereon the feet might lean,  
Spread with a fleece. Penelope sat there.  
Thither the white-armed maidens from within repair.

## 9

These then remove the tables, cups, and food,  
And from the fire-racks the red cinders fling  
Left by the suitors, and pile up fresh wood  
For light and warmth. Then yet again her king  
With bitter words did fair Melantho sting :  
“ Man, do you mean to plague us, and wait even  
Till dawn, about the women hovering  
To watch them ? Go, wretch, and give thanks to heaven,  
Lest from the doors outright with firebrands thou be driven.”

## 10

Spake with a stern eye the large-hearted sire :  
“ Why wilt thou thus for ever scorn and flee ?  
Is it my unkempt look and mean attire,  
And that I cringe among the folk through fear  
Of famine, forced by such a want severe ?  
This to poor wanderers is a common shame.  
Once to me also sorrow came not near,  
And I had riches and a noble name,  
And to all needs of all still gave, whoever came. ●

## 11

“ Legions of slaves and many thousand things  
I held, which God doth on the great bestow—  
All that the ownership of large wealth brings.  
But Zeus Kronion, for he willed it so,  
Emptied my power and sent a wave of woe.  
Thou too beware, lest haply perish all  
Thy splendour, which to-night so fair doth show,  
Or to thy sorrow the queen's heart thou gall,  
Or even Odysseus come—such chance may yet befall.

## 12

“But if that he hath perished and no more  
Returneth, yet now by Apollo’s will  
Stands a fit son within the father’s door,  
One ripe of age all duties to fulfil—  
Telemachus. No woman that works ill  
Can foil the reach of his recording eye.  
Deem ye the master is an infant still?”

He ended ; whom the wise queen, sitting by,  
Heard, and addressed the maiden, and spake angrily :

## 13

“Think not the crime by me unmarked shall go,  
Bold minion ; thine own life shall wipe the stain ;  
Since well thou knowest, for I told thee so,  
That in my halls the wanderer I was fain  
This night to ask in my exceeding pain  
For tidings of my husband.” Thus she said,  
And, turning to Eurynome, spake again :

“Bring now a chair, and let a fleece be spread.  
Here let him rest, while I ask and am answerèd.”

## 14

So did she speak, and at the word anon  
Passed from her mistress’ side Eurynome,  
And brought a chair well burnished, and thereon  
Cast the warm fleece, and by the queen sat he.  
Then first began the wise Penelope :

“O friend, this question will I first declare—  
Whence and of what land dost thou boast to be ?  
Where is thy city and thy parents where ?”

And wary-wise Odysseus spake in answer there :



## 15

“Lady, no mortal on the boundless earth  
Can slur thy glory, which hath scaled the height,  
As of a great king famous in all worth,  
Who, like a god enthroned in sovran might,  
Rules a brave nation and upholds the right ;  
And the dark earth produces wine and bread,  
With fruit the trees bend, and the hills teem white  
With flocks, and fishes swarm in the sea’s bed,  
And the whole people thrives for such a righteous head.

## 16

“Therefore, I pray thee, what thou list explore,  
But spare to ask my country and my race,  
Lest thou with sorrow wring my heart yet more  
When I remember all my sad sad case.  
’Tis not for me, poor guest in a strange place,  
Still to sit weeping till the dawn appears,  
Lest even in *thine* eyes I reap disgrace,  
Or of thy maidens one protest with jeers  
’Tis but for weight of wine my eyelids swim with tears.”

## 17

Answered to him the wise Penelope :  
“O stranger, my whole beauty, form, and grace  
The high gods ruin from the hour when he,  
My husband, went forth with the Argive race  
To Iliou. Could he but once more embrace  
And tend me, then should I for this loss gain  
A fame far better than the fairest face !  
Now am I straitened and bowed down with pain,  
And on my life the gods much evil pour amain.

## 18

“For all the chiefs who in the isles have power,  
And all in sunward Ithaca that be,  
Woo me reluctant and my house devour.  
Hence hath it come that in pure misery  
Toward strangers I forget my courtesy,  
Nor suppliants nor the public caste observe  
Of heralds ; but my heart continually  
Breaks for Odysseus, nor the suitors swerve  
From courtship, while I weave new wiles my turn to serve.

## 19

“First of the mantle—hear thou what device  
The god himself breathed in my soul. I reared  
Here in the halls a mighty loom of price.  
Anon before the suitors I appeared,  
And said : ‘ Young men, my suitors, what I feared  
Is come : divine Odysseus is no more.  
Woo ye, but leave my widowhood revered  
A little while, until my task is o’er,  
Lest my long-purposed work fall void for evermore.

## 20

“‘ I for Laertes weave a funeral sheet  
Against the final debt that he must pay ;  
And I were shamed the Achaian dames to meet,  
Should the long slumber find but shroudless clay  
Of one who owned much lordship in his day.’  
So did I speak amid the suitor throng,  
And so persuaded their large heart gave way.  
Daily I weaved, and then, to work them wrong,  
By night the woof unwound, with torches ranged along.

## 21

“ So for three years I prospered in my guile.  
But when the fourth came, as the times went by  
And the moons waxed and waned a long long while,  
Then through my women, careless creatures, I  
Was taken in the act, and bitterly  
The young men mocked me, when they came and saw.  
Thus the great web I finished by-and-by,  
Not of mine own will but compulsion’s law,  
Nor from the marriage hour can I again withdraw.

## 22

“ No help I find. My parents urge me on  
To marry, and my son chafes at the sight  
Of household waste, well knowing what is done ;  
For he hath manhood to maintain his right,  
As one whom Zeus hath lent a lordly might  
And on his prowess made high fame to wait.  
Yet even thus I pray thee tell to-night  
Thy lineage and thy name, thy land and state,  
Since not of rock thou art, nor oak of fabled date.”

## 23

And wary-wise Odysseus answering spake :  
“ Wife of Laértyades, illustrious queen,  
Still of my lineage wilt thou question make ?  
Hear then and hearken, though it make more keen  
All the old sorrows that my life hath seen.  
So must it be, when one his land hath lost  
Through such long years as I have homeless been  
On the wide earth, in weary wanderings tost.  
Yet will I now make answer, careless of the cost.

## 24

“ There is a land Crete in the wine-dark main,  
Crowned with the cincture of the flowing sea,  
Fruitful and fair in hill and valley and plain ;  
And numbers numberless of men there be  
And ninety cities. And all diversely  
Their tongues are mingled. In that land are found  
Achaians, and the Dorian races three,  
And the brave Etecretans there abound,  
Cydonians, and the high Pelasgian race renowned.

## 25

“ There with the rest lies Cnosus, a great town,  
Where Minos reigned, familiar friend of Zeus,  
Sire of my sire, the brave Deucalion,  
Who me begat and lord Idomeneus.  
My brother, skilled in every warlike use,  
Following the sons of Atreus to the fight,  
Went in beaked ships proud Ilion to reduce.  
I was the younger, my name Æthon hight,  
But he the foremost ever and the chief in might.

## 26

“ There I beheld Odysseus, and plight gave  
Of friendship, with sweet gifts : for, on his way,  
Sheer past Malea driven by wind and wave,  
He chanced on Crete, and in Amnisus lay,  
Near Ilithyia’s grot, a dangerous bay.  
He, scarce delivered, sought my brother then,  
His own dear guest-friend from an ancient day,  
But were already passed nine days or ten  
Since in the barks he sailed to Ilion with his men.

## 27

“Therefore did I right nobly entertain  
Thy husband, and the daily banquet spread,  
Since ever for himself and all his train  
I taxed the people both in wine and bread,  
Beeves and fat sheep, that they might well be fed.  
Twelve days with us the Achaians made delay,  
For yet could no man, the North blew so dread,  
Stand even on earth ; but when the thirteenth day  
Came, the wind fell, and all set sail and went their way.”

## 28

He like the truth feigned many a truthless word,  
While ever from her eyes the tears did flow,  
And her flesh melted, when the tale she heard.  
As, poured by Zephyr on the hills, the snow  
Quite melts when Eurus hath begun to blow,  
And, as it melts, the river-streams run high—  
Melted in tears her fair cheeks even so,  
While she bewailed her husband, who sat by  
And miserably beheld his dear wife's misery.

## 29

Yet in his eyes he planted the firm stare  
Like horn or iron. He the tears suppressed,  
Nor let one quiver of the lids declare  
His passion : whom at last the queen addressed :  
“ Now will I fail not to make certain test.  
If thou my husband and his men didst see,  
And in true fact receive him for thy guest,  
Tell me what raiment on his limbs had he,  
What manner of man he was, and in what company ?”

## 30

And wary-wise Odysseus answering said :  
“ These things, O lady, it is hard to show,  
Since a long interval of time hath fled ;  
For all this happened twenty years ago.  
Yet will I tell thee what I seem to know.  
Divine Odysseus did a mantle wear  
Sea-purpled, woollen, made to fold in two,  
Whereon a clasp of gold was fitted fair, [rare.  
Linked with twin stars, and worked in front with emblems

## 31

“ Clasped in his fore-feet, a dog watched a fawn,  
Panting in pain. All marked with wondering eye  
How in the gold he choked the dappled fawn,  
And how the other, struggling hard to fly,  
Flashed with her feet and panted quiveringly.  
Also a tunic on his fair limbs shone,  
Smooth as the filmy peel of onion dry,  
Soft, but in hue resplendent like the sun,  
Which the admiring women flocked to gaze upon.

## 32

“ Yet will I say, and this I leave for thee,  
I know not whether in his home he wore  
Such robes, or some companion on the sea  
Or guest-friend gave them on a foreign shore ;  
Since many loved him ever, and found few more  
His like among the Achaians. Even I  
Sword and a trailing tunic from my store  
Gave, and a rich fair robe of purple dye,  
And on the well-benched bark dismissed him honourably.

## 33

“ And, just his elder, came a herald there  
 Whose name and aspect I can also tell—  
 Round in the shoulders, dark, with curly hair,  
 Eurybates, whom eminently well  
 Odysseus loved, since he did all excel  
 In kind love to his master.” Thus he said.  
 Then from her eyelids the tears faster fell,  
 While each true token of her lord she read.  
 Tired at the last with weeping, she in answer said :

## 34

“ Friend, though indeed I pitied thee before,  
 Now shalt thou ever be most dear to me.  
 These robes I gave him at our chamber-door,  
 And thereon with mine own hand curiously  
 Fixed the bright clasp, fair ornament to be.  
 Ah ! never more to my fond arms reclaimed  
 Him shall I welcome ! Far across the sea  
 Odysseus, by a hard fate doubly blamed,  
 Went to that evil Ilion never to be named !”

## 35

And unto her the wise chief answering spake :  
 “ Wife of Laërtiades Odysseus, hear !  
 Cease now to mar thy beauty for his sake,  
 Melt not thy heart, nor shed the ceaseless tear.  
 Yet blame I not. To lose a husband dear,  
 Of whom a true wife hath conceived the seed  
 And brought forth children, it is hard to bear—  
 Though other than Odysseus, whom indeed  
 They match with gods—yet cease, and hear me, and give heed :

## 36

“ For I will speak, and all my word shall stand.  
Lately men told me of thy lord’s return,  
Not far off, in the rich Thesprotian land.  
There of a hoard of treasures did I learn  
Which he hath gotten. But destruction stern  
His friends and swift bark in the rolling brine  
Smote, from Thrinacia’s isle : such wrath did burn  
Zeus, and Hyperion (for they killed his kine) ;  
And in the waves all perished by the doom divine.

## 37

“ But him the floods hurled, on the keel astride,  
To the Phæacians, god-related race,  
Who like a god him honoured, and supplied  
Large gifts, and would have sent him to his place.  
Yea, and the man had been here a long space,  
But that it seemed more gainful in his mind  
Wealth to collect and reap exceeding grace  
From all men ; since his soul was aye inclined  
Toward wisdom, nor on earth his rival can one find.

## 38

“ These things from Pheidon I myself heard tell,  
Yea, and he told me how some while before  
Himself received and loved Odysseus well,  
Then on the voyage to his native shore.  
Brass, gold, wrought steel, and countless treasures more  
He showed me, whence a plain man wealth might reap  
To the tenth generation—such vast store  
Won by Odysseus, there in many a heap  
Ranged in the royal chambers, he, the king, did keep.



## 39

“ Of him he spake as to Dodona gone,  
 Counsel of Zeus from that great oak to hear,  
 How on his land set foot, how claim his own,  
 By stealth or strength, now absent many a year.  
 And in his house to me the king did swear,  
 Pouring libations, that both bark and men  
 Were ready, to his home thy lord to bear.  
 But me he sent first. Chanced that even then  
 Ship sailed to rich Dulichium with Thesprotian men.

## 40

“ Thus he is safe, and near you, and ere long  
 Will come back to his friends and fatherland.  
 Yea, and by oath will I the word make strong.  
 First of the gods let Zeus my witness stand,  
 Who wields the world with his all-ruling hand,  
 And next Odysseus' hearth which I have found—  
 This very year upon his native strand,  
 As one month wanes, and as the next comes round,  
 Him shalt thou see, and all my words with issue crowned.”

## 41

And him the wise Penelope addressed :  
 “ Ah! if, dear stranger, but thy word come true,  
 Each one that meets thee shall declare thee blest,  
 Such gifts will I bestow, such kind things do.  
 But in my soul another fate I view.  
 Neither will he return, nor escort fair  
 Hence shalt thou find. Remain no rulers, who  
 Like to Odysseus, if such man there were,  
 Serve the poor guest with reverence, and his way prepare.

## 42

“ But come, ye maidens, bathe him, the couch spread  
With rugs, that even till the golden morn  
He slumber comfortably warm in bed.  
And very early, when the light is born,  
Bathe and anoint him and with robes adorn,  
That with Telemachus his meal he take.  
And woe befall that suitor that flings scorn  
Against him, and his heart with wrong doth break !  
Him have I done with quite, whatever broil he make.

## 43

“ How shalt thou learn if I at all excel,  
Dear stranger, others of my sex in mind,  
If vilely clothed and not regarded well  
Thou reap scant portion in my home assigned ?  
God but a little life hath given mankind.  
He who is evil, knowing evil things,  
Curses when living, scorn when dead, doth find.  
But who is blameless, knowing blameless things,  
Strangers of him speak well, and widely his fame rings.”

## 44

Answered the wary-wise one, versed in ills :  
“ Wife of Laërtiades Odysseus, hear !  
Since I first left the snowy Cretan hills  
In well-benched bark to cross the rolling mere,  
Warm coverings are to me no longer dear.  
I will lie down as I have lain of old  
All the long night on sleepless couch severe.  
For many are the nights wherein I hold  
Comfortless watch, till Morn her glowing gates unfold.

## 45

“ Thus yet again shall the long night be spent  
Now ; nor the foot-bath to my mind is sweet.  
None of these maidens who the house frequent,  
None of them all, shall ever wash my feet.  
But if there be an agèd dame discreet,  
Who in her spirit hath endured as much,  
And all whose sorrow with mine own doth meet,  
As thus for thus, and such a grief for such,  
Her will I not forbid my toilworn feet to touch.”

## 46

Answered to him the wise Penelope :  
“ Friend, than thyself it never yet befel  
That dearer guest or wiser came to me,  
Who in thy wit dost very far excel  
All strangers, and so fair a tale dost tell.  
Yes, there is here an agèd dame discreet,  
Who nursed that miserable, and loved him well,  
And held him in her arms with fondlings sweet,  
A new-born child. Though feeble, she shall wash thy feet.

## 47

“ Come, Eurycleia, rise up, wash the feet  
Of one coeval with thy lord and king.  
Such may Odysseus' hands be, such his feet,  
For grief old age doth very quickly bring.”  
Thus said the queen. The other, covering  
Her face with both hands, shed there pitiously  
Warm tears, and spake a lamentable thing :  
“ Now for thy sake, my child, ah ! woe is me !  
Thine was a godly soul, but yet Zeus hated thee !

## 48

“None gave to Zeus so many offerings dear  
As thou, who for serene old age didst pray,  
And in thy halls a noble son to rear.  
Yet hath the Father thy returning day  
From thee of all men taken clean away.  
Haply the women scoffed him when he came  
To strange doors, eager in their pitiless play,  
As by these women with no sense of shame,  
Poor stranger, thou art scoffed and made a butt for blame.

## 49

“Such thou wilt not let wash thy feet, but me  
The queen commandeth, not against my will.  
Yea, for the sake of wise Penelope  
And thine I wash thee. Much experienced ill  
Deep in the breast my heart doth throughly fill.  
But hear, I pray thee, what I have to say.  
Guests not a few wend hither, but never till  
To-night have I known any come this way,  
Whose form, voice, feet, such likeness to my lord bewray.”

## 50

And then to Eurycleia answered he :  
“Dame, all that ever with their eyes have seen  
Affirm that we are like exceedingly,  
Even as thou dost very wisely ween.”  
So he. The other poured in caldron sheen  
Cold water and then hot. Odysseus there  
Sat by the fire, and toward the shade did lean,  
Lest in the firelight, when his feet were bare,  
She the old scar discover and all the truth declare.

## 51

Then she came near and washed her lord, and knew  
That scar, which once with gleamy tusk a boar  
Dug slantly, on Parnassus hill, whereto  
He came to see Autolycus of yore,  
His mother's sire, who very far before  
All men in sleight of oaths and dexterous skill  
Ranked by the gift of Hermes : such sweet store  
Of lambs and kids at Hermes' shrine to kill  
He ceased not, and the god held converse with him still.

## 52

Now this Autolycus, it so befel,  
Came on a day to Ithaca's fair land ;  
And in the halls, when he had eaten well,  
Wise Eurycleia did before him stand,  
And softly on his knees with this demand  
His grandchild set, then newly-born, and spake :  
" Autolycus, receive into thy hand  
Thy child's own infant ; name him for her sake,  
Since ye the blessed fruit of many prayers partake."

## 53

And then Autolycus in answer said :  
" Give ye the name which I shall now declare—  
For against many nursing angers dread,  
Both men and women under the wide air,  
Far through the boon earth to your home I fare :  
Therefore Odysseus be his name, and I  
When, grown up, he shall come to see me, where  
On hill Parnassus my possessions lie,  
Will send him home enriched and glad exceedingly."

## 54

So for the gifts Odysseus came ; and there  
That grandsire and his sons received him well,  
With greetings of the hand and welcome fair,  
And on his neck the kind Amphithea fell,  
His mother's mother, in delight to dwell  
On face and eyes so lovely to behold  
With kisses ; and Autolycus urged well  
His valiant sons the rich feast to unfold,  
Who from the field up-drove a fine bull five years old.

## 55

Him flayed they, jointed, and cut up with skill,  
And deftly roasted on the spits anon,  
And to all gave that they might feast their fill  
Thus through the day divine they lingered on  
And feasted till the falling of the sun,  
Sating their souls with meat and wine and bread.  
But when the cloud came and the day was done,  
And the desire of food and drink had fled,  
They took the gift of sleep, retiring each to bed.

## 56

But when the rosy-fingered Dawn appeared,  
Autolycus and all his sons addressed  
Their hearts to hunting, and with dogs they fared  
Forth to the coverts on the windy crest  
Of hill Parnassus with their noble guest.  
From the fair-flowing river of Ocean deep  
The Sun, new-rising from his couch of rest,  
Hit slant the furrows, when that sylvan steep  
The huntsmen neared, wherein the woodland creatures sleep.

## 57

Before them scoured the keen dogs, and then came  
Sons of Autolycus, and with them there  
Odysseus, spear in hand, to find the game.  
But, couched among the dry leaves of his lair,  
Slept the huge boar in secret woodland, where  
Never the Sun pierced with his beaming ray,  
Nor the moist breathings of the wintry air  
Blew, nor the cold rain dripped by night or day ;  
So was it roofed around and woven every way.

## 58

Round him a noise of dogs and feet there came.  
He from his lair straight forward, with the spine  
Well bristled, and his fierce eyes glaring flame,  
Rushed, and made halt before the huntsmen's line.  
First on him pressed Odysseus with design  
Direly to wound him, and with lifted spear.  
But the boar, closing with the chief divine,  
With slant tusk just above the knee ripped sheer  
The flesh, goring it out, and to the bone came near.

## 59

But him Odysseus hit and wounded sore  
On the right shoulder, yea the shining head  
Of the strong spear clave through him, and the boar  
Fell screaming in the dust, and his life fled.  
But all the young men, when the beast lay dead,  
Tended the blameless brave Odysseus well,  
And bound his wound up, and the blood-stream red  
Staunch'd with the singing of a potent spell,  
And to their father's home conveyed him from the dell.

## 60

Whom then with his sons' help Autolycus  
Healed, and with splendid gifts sent on his way  
Rejoicing. And his sire illustrious  
And mother on the dear returning day  
Welcome Odysseus gladly, nor delay  
To ask him of the scar, that they may hear.  
Right well did he the whole adventure say,  
How in the hunt the rushing boar came near,  
And slantwise, with his gleamy tusk, the flesh ripped clear.

## 61

Thus the old nurse then washed him in the hall,  
Wiped him with open hands, and by-and-by  
Came on the scar and knew it, and let fall  
His heel, which on the bronze clanged heavily,  
Tilting it backward ; and the bath ran dry.  
Sorrow at once and joy her soul bedim,  
While in her throat the liquid accents die,  
And both her eyelids with the warm tears swim.  
She to his beard upraised her hand, and spake to him :

## 62

“Surely thou art Odysseus—yes, thou art—  
My darling child, and I not knew my king  
Till I had handled thee in every part.”  
She spake and, eager to reveal the thing,  
Full on Penelope her glance did fling ;  
But, for Athene turned her thoughts away,  
She nor regarded nor beheld. The king  
Quickly his right hand on her throat did lay,  
And drew her with his left yet nearer, and did say :



## 63

"Nurse, mother, hast thou loved me at thy breast  
 Only to kill me? In the twentieth year  
 Home I arrive with many toils opprest.  
 Now since thou knowest, and God makes it clear,  
 Hush! lest another should suspect or hear.  
 Else I avow, and all my word shall stand,  
 Not even thee, my nurse, will I then spare  
 When God subdues the suitors to my hand,  
 And with the sword I kill this faithless household band."

## 64

To whom in answer Eurycleia spake :  
 "What word, my darling, hath thy lips now passed?  
 Nothing, thou knowest, can have power to shake  
 My heart. Like stone or iron I keep fast  
 Thy secret. Hear me yet, and well forecast  
 This counsel in thy soul. When God shall tame  
 All the proud suitors to thy hand at last,  
 Were it not well that I the women name,  
 And show thee who deal wrong, and who are void of blame?"

## 65

And wary-wise Odysseus answering spake :  
 "Why name them to me, nurse? There is no call.  
 Myself of each will perfect reckoning take.  
 Hold well thy peace, and to the gods leave all."  
 Then the old nurse new water through the hall  
 Brought, for the first was spilt, and him with care  
 Washed and anointed, and again made fall  
 Over the scar those rags which he did wear.  
 He then, adjusting these, drew to the fire his chair.

## 66

And then began the wise Penelope :  
 “ Friend, I would fain ask yet a little more ;  
 For soon of rest will the sweet season be,  
 For whom rest is, though one be grievèd sore.  
 But me the gods unmeasurable store  
 Of grief have given, long tears, a life of pain,  
 Tending the house by day ; and evermore,  
 When night calls others to their couch again,  
 Mine, sown with thorny sorrows, I frequent in vain.

## 67

“ Even as when, in the new vernal hours,  
 Couched in the covert of some leafy dale  
 Green all around her with ambrosial showers,  
 Pandarus’ child, the sylvan nightingale,  
 With lovely variations her sweet tale  
 Trills beautifully well, and the woods ring  
 With sorrow, while her boy she still doth wail,  
 Itys, dear Itys, child of Zethus king,  
 Whom blindly she cut off and now doth sadly sing—

## 68

“ Thus ever the wild passion to and fro  
 Veers in my breast, and rends the heart in twain.  
 Whether to stay here with my child, or go,  
 Wife of the bravest of the Achaian train,  
 I wist not. Once Telemachus was fain  
 To hold me in the house nor let me wed.  
 Now grown to manhood, with his mind in rein,  
 He even prays me to depart, for dread  
 Lest the Achaians eat him out of home and bread.

## 69

“ But come now, hearken, and my dream expound.  
A score of geese within the palace eat  
Grain from the water, and I gaze around,  
And my heart warms to see them love the wheat.  
And a great eagle from his dark retreat,  
Curve-beaked and strong, from the hill downward bore,  
And brake their necks, and slew them at my feet,  
And they lay strewn along the palace-floor.  
He the divine air mounted, and was seen no more.

## 70

“ Then loudly in my dream I wailed and shed  
Tears ; and the fair Achaian maidens came  
And found me wailing that my geese were dead.  
When lo ! that eagle, even the very same,  
Perched on the eaves, there seeming to exclaim  
In human voice : ‘ Take heart, be of good cheer,  
Thou daughter of Icarus, large in fame !  
Be not amazed, for thou beholdest here  
No dream, but a true vision, to be yet made clear.

## 71

“ ‘ These geese within thy court the suitors are,  
And I, who slew them, was before to thee  
An eagle, now thy husband, come from far ;  
And a dire doom shalt thou behold by me  
Dealt on the horde of suitors.’ Thus spake he ;  
And from mine eyelids fell the slumber sweet.  
Then through the palace peering hard I see  
My geese still swallowing by the trough their wheat,  
All eating as aforetime I had seen them eat.”

## 72

And wary-wise Odysseus answering spake :  
“ Lady, thy dream can one in nowise wrest  
Wide of the goal, nor other meaning make.  
Odysseus hath himself revealed it best.  
Dire is the doom thy suitors shall invest ;  
None of their number the dark Fate shall flee.”  
But him the wise Penelope addressed :  
“ Dreams but ensnare us ; one can seldom see  
Just issue, nor all things to men completed be.

## 73

“ Two diverse gates there are of bodiless dreams,  
These of sawn ivory, and those of horn.  
Such dreams as issue where the ivory gleams  
Fly without fate, and turn our hopes to scorn.  
But dreams which issue through the burnished horn,  
What man soe'er beholds them on his bed,  
These work with virtue and of truth are born.  
Never from thence came the dire dream I read ;  
Else what a joy were ours to see the suitors dead !

## 74

“ But a new thing will I declare and say,  
And thou revolve it well within thy breast.  
Now comes the dawning of that fatal day,  
Not to be named, which shall for ever wrest  
Me from this hearth—for I lay down a test :  
Twelve staves all set with rings, and in a line  
Planted like stays of oak, whereon doth rest  
A keel in building ; and my lord divine  
Still from afar off, standing, shot through the whole line.

## 75

“ This is the test which for the suitors now  
I offer, and the man whose strength of hand  
Draws most with ease the nerve of that great bow,  
And shoots an arrow through the staves which stand  
Twelve in a line, I follow his command,  
Leaving this house which so delightful seems,  
Home of my youth, and very nobly planned,  
Which with all wealth and all enjoyment teems,  
Where yet the mind *must* wander, even in my dreams.”

## 76

And answering spake divine Odysseus there :  
“ Lady, defer not in thy house to show  
This trial ; for Odysseus shall appear  
Ere they the nerve stretch of this burnished bow,  
Or shoot a winged shaft through the iron row.”  
And him the wise Penelope addressed :  
“ O stranger, wouldst thou charm me even so,  
And always at my side conversing rest,  
Seems that mine eyelids never should with sleep be pressed.

## 77

“ Yet not for ever void of sleep remains  
Man ; for the gods by rule of life dispense  
Sleep on all mortals whom the earth maintains.  
So to my chamber will I now go hence,  
And on the lone couch steep my weary sense  
With weeping—such a grief my soul hath claimed  
From that dark time when, for a king’s defence,  
Odysseus, by a hard fate doubly blamed,  
Went to that evil Ilion never to be named.

78

There will I lie down ; but make thou thy bed,  
Whether thou sleepest or sad watch be kept,  
Here on the ground ; or these thy couch shall spread.”  
She spake, and turning with her maidens stept  
Thence to her chamber, and in secret wept  
Odysseus, as of old, her husband dear,  
Nor closed the lamentation till she slept ;  
For to her eyelids did Athene bear  
Sweet slumbers, shed with rest, that might her strength repair.



## BOOK XX.

ODYSSEUS IS INSULTED BY CTESIPPUS—THE SUITORS EXPEL  
THEOCLYMENUS.





## B O O K   X X.

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### 1

But in the vestibule Odysseus lay  
Couched on raw bull's-hide and thick skins of sheep,  
Slain by the proud Achaians in the day.  
Him in a coverlet wrapt warm for sleep  
Eurynome. Odysseus, fierce to keep  
His wrath on fire, and lying broad awake,  
There nursed against the suitors vengeance deep.  
Forth from the house the harlot women brake,  
Mingled in laughter loud and wanton merrimake.

### 2

Much was he moved, and in his soul forecast  
Whether to rush forth and destroy them all,  
Or let them sleep their latest and their last  
With the proud suitors ere that doom befall.  
Inly his heart growled as he chewed his gall.  
As growls a bitch who round her whelps doth pace,  
A strange man seeing, whom she would fight withal,  
So growled his deep heart at their evil ways.  
Smiting his breast he spake, his anger to abase :

## 3

“ Bear up, my soul, a little longer yet ;  
A little longer to thy purpose cling !  
For, in the day when the dire Cyclops ate  
Thy valiant friends, a far more horrible thing  
Thou didst endure, till wit had power to bring  
Thee from that den where thou didst think to die.”  
So spake he, with rebuke thus quieting  
His dear heart ; and at anchor by-and-by  
Sternly the dark soul rested and did patient lie.

## 4

But ever he rolled tossing to and fro.  
As when a man beside a blazing fire  
Turneth a rich fat goat-paunch to and fro,  
Over and over, with intense desire  
Quickly to roast it, so with tossings dire  
He tumbled, and debated in his bed  
How on the suitors to wreak vengeful ire,  
One against many. And lo ! near his head  
Stood in a woman's form Athene, and thus said :

## 5

“ Ill-fated above all, why dost thou wake ?  
Here is thy home, thy wife, and such a son  
As men wish for their own.” He answering spake :  
“ Yea, these things are, and yet I am but one :  
How then, O goddess, shall the deed be done ?  
For in close herd the suitors linger still.  
And greater thing yet am I musing on :  
If with the help of Zeus and thine I kill  
These shameless men, think now, what flight can I fulfil ?”

## 6

She answered: "Doubter, a man trusts his friend  
Far weaker, mortal, and not wise like me.  
I am that goddess who for aye defend  
Thy life, and plainly I avow to thee:  
Though fifty bands stood threatening thee and me,  
All breathing slaughter, their fat kine and sheep  
Thou shouldst drive off, and take their wealth in fee.  
Now slumber; to be void all night of sleep  
Wears a man out; and soon deliverance thou shalt reap."

## 7

She spake, and sleep did on his eyelids pour.  
Then the divine one to Olympus passed.  
He, seized with slumber, and from anguish sore  
Loosed in his soul, with limbs at ease slept fast.  
Stirred from her rest his dear wife weeping cast  
Her fair limbs from the carven couch, and made  
Her ceaseless lamentation. At the last  
She the strong tempest of her tears allayed,  
And with a yearning soul to Artemis first prayed:

## 8

"Artemis, child of Zeus, divine one dread,  
Ah, with an arrow wouldst thou rive away  
My life this moment, and here strike me dead!  
Or that a hurtling storm could me convey  
Down the dark regions from the light of day,  
And cast me in the coil of Ocean's river!  
As when the tempest, whirling far astray,  
Pandarus' daughters from their home did sever,  
Whose parents the gods killed, and hid them hence for ever!

## 9

“ Orphans they were, and Aphrodite then  
Fed them with milk and honey and curds and wine ;  
Whom past the daughters of the tribes of men  
Hera gave beauty, and in wit to shine ;  
Chaste Artemis gave stature ; works divine  
Athene taught them ; Aphrodite went  
To Thunderer Zeus, who searches the dark scrine  
Of Fate, and can discern which way the event  
Hangs, to demand their marriage in her kind intent.

## 10

“ So when to far Olympus she had passed,  
Came the fierce Harpies and whirled clean away  
Those beauteous maidens in their hurtling blast,  
To serve the hateful Furies. O that they,  
Who mid the mansions of Olympus stay,  
Would whirl me also from the earth outright !  
Or bright-haired Artemis my life would slay,  
That, once Odysseus seen, I could take flight  
Under the hateful earth, and no worse man delight !

## 11

“ Yet bearable is sorrow, if alone  
Wrapt in sore anguish through the day one weep,  
And, when the gloom falls and the light hath flown,  
Then the gods send us their refreshful sleep,  
Which good and evil from our mind doth sweep.  
But now bad dreams by the dark fate are mine.  
For one like him, ere yet he sailed the deep,  
Near me rejoicing did this night recline,  
And I—no dream I thought it, but a truth divine.”

## 12

She ceased ; and golden-thronèd Morning beamed.  
And the divine Odysseus heard her cry  
And doubted, for with fond eyes standing seemed  
His own wife near him. He the skins laid by,  
Placed out of doors the bull's-hide, and on high  
His hands uplifted, and to Zeus made prayer :  
“ O Father Zeus, if over moist and dry  
Me with good will to mine own land ye bare  
At last, though sorely crushed with toil and grief and care,

## 13

“ Let some one of the moving men within  
Send forth a voice that I may know the sign ;  
And from without some wonder let me win,  
Omen of Zeus.” Thus he in prayer divine.  
And the great Sire did favourably incline,  
And far up thundered in a cloudless sky,  
Where the serene vaults of Olympus shine.  
And brave Odysseus heard him roll on high  
The thunder, and in heart rejoiced exceedingly.

## 14

And, not far off, a woman of the mill,  
Where for the suitors the soft flour was ground,  
Forth from the palace sent an omen shrill.  
For women, twelve in all, the mills work round,  
Piling continually the mealy mound  
Of barley and fine wheat, the marrow of men.  
Now all the rest slept. She alone was found  
Yet grinding, weakest of them all. And then  
Pausing she spake, clear signal for her lord to ken :

## 15

“ O Father Zeus, who gods and men dost sway,  
 Loud rings thy thunder from the starry heaven  
 Where never a cloud appeareth in the way.  
 Surely to some one thou a sign hast given.  
 Now help me too, poor sufferer over-driven,  
 And in Odysseus' halls let eat their last  
 All the proud suitors, ere day verge to even ;  
 Who loose my knees, and make me toil and fast  
 Grinding the meal with pain. Now let them eat their last ! ”

## 16

She spake. Divine Odysseus, for her cry  
 And the loud peal of Zeus, joyed in his breast,  
 And knew the suitors in their sin should die.  
 But soon upon the hearth clear fire the rest  
 Kindled. Telemachus, in fair robes drest,  
 Came from his chamber as the stir upran,  
 Armed with a long spear tipt with steely crest,  
 Sworded and sandalled, a most godlike man,  
 And on the door-sill paused, and to the nurse began :

## 17

“ Nurse, have ye served the stranger-guest with grace,  
 And fair couch given and entertainment fit,  
 Or let him lie where he might find a place ?  
 For now, with all her wisdom and her wit,  
 Not always my dear mother the mean doth hit.  
 Often the worthless far beyond his claim  
 She honours, while the good goes ill acquit.”  
 To whom in answer spake the agèd dame :  
 “ Now be content, dear child, nor thus the blameless blame.

## 18

“ Wine, all he wished for, drank the stranger-guest ;  
But, when she asked him, he declined to eat.  
When he at last remembered sleep and rest,  
She bade prepare a couch, refreshful, sweet.  
He, like a wretch whom many storms have beat  
And Fate drives miserably o’er land and wave,  
Would not in rugs lie, nor a couch think meet ;  
Nought save a hide and sheep-skins would he crave.  
Thus in the porch he lay ; and we a covering gave.”

## 19

So spake the nurse. Telemachus anon  
Went holding in his hand the steely spear,  
And toward the council moved, but not alone ;  
For, as he went, his swift dogs followed near.  
His form Athene did with grace endear,  
And the well-greaved Achaians gazed intent,  
And wondered while he passed without a peer.  
But Eurycleia, best of women, went,  
And thus the handmaids called and to their business sent :

## 20

“ Up now, and scurry about, and sweep the hall  
And sprinkle it, and rich rugs on throne and chair  
Cast, and with sponges wipe the tables all,  
And cleanse the bowls and cups and beakers fair.  
Some for fresh water to the well repair ;  
Go with all speed, nor linger by the way ;  
For, as I live, there is no time to spare,  
Nor will the suitors any more delay,  
But with the dawn come back ; all hold a feast to-day.”



## 21

So spake she, and they heard her and obeyed.  
Passed to the dark well twenty ; and the rest  
Featly their business in the house essayed.  
Soon through the gates the Achaian servants pressed,  
Clave the wood deftly, and the hearth well dressed.  
With pitchers from the well the women speed.  
Then came the swineherd with three swine, his best.  
These in the fair enclosure he let feed,  
And to Odysseus first with gentle words gave heed :

## 22

“ Friend, say if yet the Achaians act aright  
Or spurn thee as aforetime in the hall.”  
But he : “ Eumæus, may the gods requite  
These insults keen, wherewith my soul they gall  
In house not theirs, and have no shame at all !”  
Thus were they twain conversing ; and came near,  
Driving the flower of goats, from field and stall  
Culled choicest, for the suitors’ morning cheer,  
Melanthius, and with him two herdsmen in the rear.

## 23

Under the echoing porch the goats he bound,  
And then with sharp words to Odysseus cried :  
“ Man, to thy beggary shall no rest be found ?  
Wilt never avaunt ? Now scarce shall we decide  
This issue, thou and I, ere blows be tried ;  
So fast thy greed to this one mansion clings.”  
Thus did he jeer. The other nought replied,  
But, filled in soul with dark imaginings,  
Silently waved his head and brooded evil things.

## 24

And next to these Philocteus, chief of men,  
Came with a heifer and fat goats, conveyed  
From the mainland across by ferrymen,  
Who for all comers ply their daily trade.  
His charge he tethered, and then question made  
Of the good swineherd : " Who, my friend, is he,  
This stranger-guest that to our doors hath strayed ?  
Whence and of what land doth he boast to be ?  
And is his birth-place near, or far beyond the sea ?

## 25

" Lo, on his brow the regal stamp doth shine,  
Yet seems he stormed upon by adverse things :  
For the gods ever, by their will divine,  
Wear out mankind with grief and wanderings,  
While they weave skeins of sorrow even for kings."  
He spake, and stretched his hand forth lovingly,  
And the man greeted with warm welcomings :  
" Hail, father guest, and may'st thou happy be  
Hereafter in thy life, who now hast misery !

## 26

" O Father Zeus, no god more fell than thou  
Lives in the heaven ! Poor man no weight, no worth,  
Holds in thy sight, who scornest that we bow  
Under a load of sorrows in the earth,  
We, thine own race, to whom thou gavest birth.  
For, when I marked him, the cold sweat did run,  
And mine eyes wept, since haply in like dearth,  
Clothed in such rags, with kindred griefs undone,  
He too, Odysseus, roams—if yet he see the sun.

## 27

“ But if he is not, if his life be lost,  
Woe, woe to me then, for my lord divine !  
Who long since on the Cephallenian coast  
Did all his cattle to my charge consign.  
Well did we thrive ; one cannot count the kine ;  
Yea, with good reason might a man be glad  
To view such increase in his wide-browed kine.  
Now strange men eat whatever may be had.  
Fat beeves I drive here daily, and my soul is sad.

## 28

“ Odysseus' child they not regard at all,  
Nor of the gods the after-vengeance fear,  
Fain to divide between them in the hall  
Wealth of a man now absent many a year ;  
While to and fro within my breast doth veer  
The grieved heart, and I know not what to do.  
For bitterly against my soul it were,  
Here while the son yet lives to claim his due,  
To go hence with the kine, and seek a people new.

## 29

“ Yet even more I shudder to abide,  
And with dull sorrow in a slow decay  
Over the kine of strangers to preside.  
And truly I were gone this many a day  
To seek another master far away ;  
Since wrongs too hard for flesh and blood to bear  
Afflict us ; but within my soul there lay  
Hope yet a little that with some kind air  
Homeward he still might sail, and all the suitors scare.”

## 30

And wary-wise Odysseus answering spake :  
 " Herdsman, not base nor foolish is thy word ;  
 And a high matter, for thy wisdom's sake,  
 Now will I tell, and a great oath afford.  
 Attest it Zeus, this hospitable board,  
 And dear hearth of Odysseus void of blame !  
 While thou art here, returneth home thy lord,  
 And thine own eyes shall mark him, with dire aim  
 Smiting the fell usurpers of his regal claim."

## 31

And answer made the herdsman of the kine :  
 " This word, O guest, Kronion prosper fair !  
 Soon shalt thou know what power of arm is mine."  
 Likewise Eumæus to all gods made prayer  
 That wise Odysseus homeward might repair.  
 Meanwhile within their mind the suitors move  
 Death for Telemachus. And behold in air  
 A bird, an eagle, flying far above !  
 High on the left he flew, and held a trembling dove.

## 32

Then said Amphinomus : " O friends, our plan  
 Telemachus to smite will ne'er succeed.  
 But time it is that we the feast began."  
 Thus spake Amphinomus, and all agreed.  
 Swift to the palace of the king they speed,  
 And on the chairs and benches quickly lay  
 Their mantles. Soon the goats and fat swine bleed,  
 Sheep and a heifer of the herd they slay,  
 And roast with care the entrails, and the bowls array.

## 33

The swineherd set the cups ; Philoetius bread  
In baskets gave ; Melanthius poured the wine.  
They with quick hands assail the banquet spread.  
Meanwhile Telemachus with shrewd design  
Hard by the stony threshold did assign  
A small rude table and unseemly chair  
For his dear father, the wise chief divine,  
And of the entrails gave him a due share,  
And filled a golden goblet, and addressed him there :

## 34

“ Now with the other guests sit drinking wine,  
And I will save thee from all scorn and wrong.  
For this house is Odysseus' house and mine,  
Not public. And keep down your spirits strong,  
Ye suitors, lest a battle arise ere long.”  
He spake. The suitors in fell wrath did bite  
Their lips, and wondered that with such bold tongue  
He dared to beard them, and thus talk of fight.  
Then said Eupheithes' child, Antinous, chief in might :

## 35

“ Hard though the word, bear with him, O my friends.  
Loud let him rail and threaten a great show.  
For Zeus Kronion prospered not our ends,  
Else had we stopped his shrill tongue long ago.”  
His word the prince regarded not. And lo !  
Far up the long main street the heralds bring  
Fair hecatomb divine ; and all below  
The dark grove of Apollo, the archer king,  
Now the long-haired Achaians are seen gathering.

## 36

When they had roasted well the outer meat,  
Fresh from the spits they drew it, and with care  
Distributing to each his portion sweet  
They feasted with delight on the choice fare.  
Also the servants to Odysseus bare  
A goodly meal and equal to their own,  
And placed it on the board, his stated share.  
For thus their lord commanded to be done,  
Telemachus, divine Odysseus' godlike son.

## 37

Hardened Athene then the suitors' heart,  
That they should go from sin to sin, and make  
Soul of Laertiades Odysseus smart  
Yet deeper. And amid the suitors spake  
One who divine laws ever wont to break,  
Ctesippus, who in Samè did abide.  
He, trusting in his wealth, was fain to take  
Wife of the lord Odysseus for his bride.  
He mid the suitors spake in overweening pride :

## 38

"Hear me, ye noble suitors, while I speak!  
This stranger, as beseemeth, long ago  
Hath, like all strangers who this mansion seek,  
His full share; since toward such men to deal woe  
Is neither honourable nor just, I trow.  
Mark what a loyal gift from even me  
He wins; and let him for this grace bestow  
Here on the servant of the bath good fee,  
Or other of the slaves that in this mansion be."

## 39

Thus did he speak, and fiery insult planned ;  
For a bull's foot, which in the basket lay,  
Forthwith he seized and flung with violent hand.  
Nor for the blow did brave Odysseus stay,  
But from the weapon, as it came that way,  
Dipped his head lightly to the left ; and, while  
Stern in his breast the writhing angers play,  
Smiled from the heart a fell sardonic smile.  
And the foot flew right on, and did the wall defile.

## 40

And lo ! Telemachus a fierce word spake :  
"Hear now, Ctesippus, and thank Heaven for this,  
Far better is it for thine own life's sake,  
That the poor stranger crouched and let thee miss,  
Else had I surely made my javelin hiss  
Clean through thy midriff ; and thy father here,  
Not for the banquet of thy nuptial bliss,  
But for thy burial had set forth good cheer.  
Therefore let all take warning and my house revere.

## 41

"I, once a child, can now discern full well  
Things good and evil. Sheep and wine and corn  
Spoil as ye list : 'tis hard for one to quell  
So many : but refrain from deeds of scorn.  
Better it were that I had not been born,  
Or better I were slain, if so ye will,  
Than thus behold the stranger-guest forlorn  
Spurned in mine own house and entreated ill,  
And the maids dealt with roughly, your dire lusts to fill."

## 42

He ceased, but all were silent, and at last  
Son of Damastor Agelaus spake :

“ Friends, when a just word from the lips hath passed,  
Not righteous is it scorn and strife to make.  
Nor let this stranger of foul wrong partake,  
Nor any of the servants that be here.

But to Telemachus I fain would break  
This counsel mild, and to his mother dear,

So that it please their spirit and they list to hear.

## 43

“ While yet ye hoped Odysseus should come back,  
Nothing forbade that ye should still remain  
And of their marriage let the suitors lack,  
Since his return were doubly to your gain.  
But now that he hath perished is quite plain.

Wherefore advise thy mother at last to wed  
That man to whom her spirit is most fain.

So from thy father's wealth shalt thou be fed

Rejoicing, while she tends another home and bed.”

## 44

To whom the wise Telemachus replied :

“ Now by the lord Zeus and my father's woe  
Who far from Ithaca's dear soil hath died,  
Or wanders in the wide earth to and fro,  
Not for my word doth the queen still forego  
This marriage : let her marry whom she list,  
And on that day will I large gifts bestow.

But she shall never be from home dismissed

Perforce, nor such dire wrong God suffer to exist !”



## 45

Scarce had Telemachus the word let fall,  
When lo! Athene mid the suitor-throng  
Stirred a wild scream of laughter in the hall,  
Not to be quenched, and made their mind go wrong.  
Smiles not their own writhed hideously along  
The lank jaws, and their teeth chewed bloody meat ;  
Stood in their eyes a ghastly rain, and strong  
With anguish in their breast the proud heart beat.  
Then cried the godlike seer, uprising from his seat :

## 46

“ Ah wretched ! what is this ? what horrible woe  
Comes on ye now ? Night folds in dark embrace  
Your heads, your features, and your knees below ;  
Wild cries are kindled, tears are on the face,  
Blood stains the walls and each columnar space ;  
With ghosts the vestibule, the court, doth swarm,  
Who toward the far realms of the west apace  
Strive, with their eyes on Erebus ; the sun's form  
Dies from the heaven, and falleth a black shadow of storm.”

## 47

Spake the divine seer Theoclymenus.  
Sweetly the suitors laughed, and thus began  
Eurymachus the child of Polybus :  
“ Now of a truth meseemeth that the man  
Fails of his senses, if such things he scan,  
New from another land, I know not where.  
Young men, arise ! and quickly as ye can  
Forth to the market thrust him, to prate there,  
Since to the shadow of night these things he doth compare.”

## 48

And the divine seer answered him again :  
“ Needs not, Eurymachus, to send with me  
Young men for guides, my pathway to make plain.  
Eyes, ears, and feet for mine own use there be,  
And a true mind not moulded pitiably.  
With these will I go hence ; for I behold  
Evil upon you coming, which none can flee  
Of all these suitors who the mansion hold  
Of godlike brave Odysseus, and in wrong wax bold.”

## 49 •

Thus went he forth, and to Piræus came,  
Who well received him. But the suitors all  
Looked one to other, and with angry blame  
Telemachus reviled ; and loud did call  
One of those fiery youths amid the hall :  
“ Telemachus, of all men thou art found  
Worst off for guests. Comes first within thy wall,  
Pining for food and drink, this cringing hound,  
Weak, without skill to work, a cumberer of the ground ;

## 50

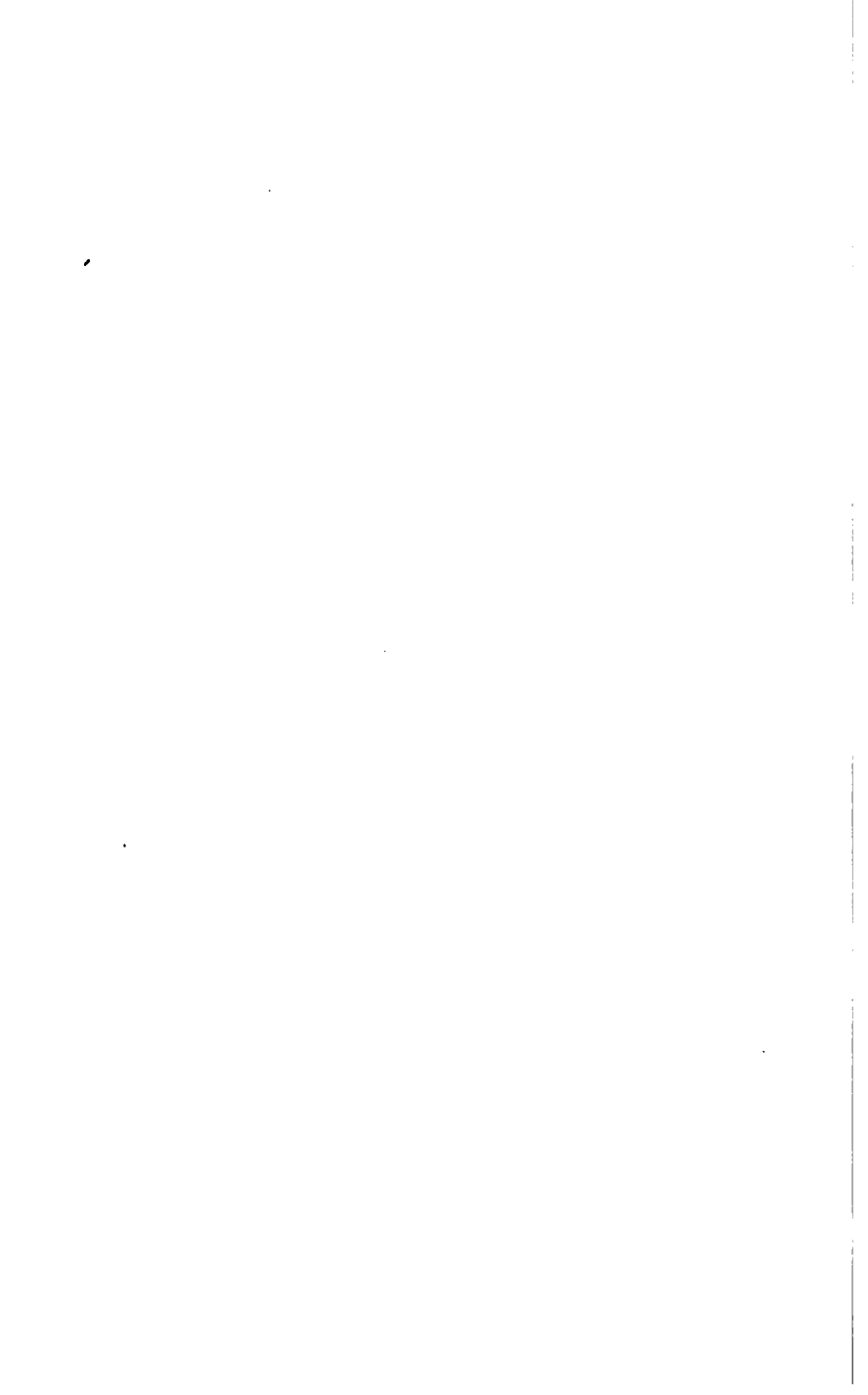
“ And now this other rises up to preach.  
Wouldst thou but hear me, good advice have I.  
Come, let us take both strangers to the beach,  
And clap them in a swift ship by-and-by,  
And send them overseas to Sicily,  
Whence a rich guerdon thou may'st chance to gain.”  
Thus spake the young men. He with silent eye  
Sat gazing on his sire, expecting fain  
When he the shameless suitors should by force restrain.

## 51

Meanwhile anear them, where her throne was set,  
Icarius' daughter, wise Penelope,  
Heard the men talking in the hall, where yet  
Smiling at ease, with voices of wild glee,  
They from the victims furnished delicately  
Their morning meal—but what more dire repast  
Could happen than their next was doomed to be,  
Now by a goddess and brave man forecast,  
Wherein the first wrong-doers were to suffer at last ?

# BOOK XXI.

THE TRIAL OF THE BOW—ODYSSEUS DISCOVERS HIMSELF TO  
EUMÆUS AND PHILÆTIUS.



## B O O K   X X I.

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### 1

BUT in the queen's heart did Athene breathe  
This counsel, that from steel and bow might be  
Strife to the suitors and a fount of death.  
She the stair clomb, and took the well-bent key  
Bright, of pure brass, handled with ivory,  
And with her women to the chamber went,  
The last and furthest, her lord's treasury,  
Wherein large store of well-wrought steel lay pent,  
Silver and brass and gold, for use and ornament.

### 2

Stocked with sad arrows there the quiver lay,  
And the great bow bent back in idle ease,  
Gifts which in Lacedæmon on a day  
The godlike Iphitus Eurytides  
His guest-friend, gave : for in Messene these  
Met at the house of brave Orsilochus, when  
Odysseus came to seek his public fees ;  
For some Messenians in their ships had then  
Lifted three hundred sheep from Ithaca—flocks and men.

## 3

Hence, young in years, on a far embassy,  
 Sent by his father and the chieftains, came  
 Odysseus. Seeking twelve brood-mares came he,  
 Iphitus, and twelve mules beneath the same.  
 Whence doom and death assailed him, when he came  
 To Heracles, great worker, child of Zeus,  
 Who on his own hearth slew him with foul shame  
 Despite of Heaven, and to the dire abuse  
 Of guesthood, and the steeds kept back for his own use.

## 4

Thus he Odysseus met, and gave the bow  
 Which Eurytus left dying to his son.  
 Sharp sword Odysseus did on him bestow  
 And strong spear. Thus their friendship was begun.  
 Nor either use of other's table won ;  
 For Iphitus by child of Zeus was slain.  
 And profit of that bow Odysseus none  
 Reaped in the war. At home it aye had lain,  
 Memorial of his friend—there used, his strength to train.

## 5

So to that chamber the fair queen divine  
 Came, and the oaken threshold paused before,  
 Skilfully planed and swerveless to the line,  
 Set with tall pillars and the shining door ;  
 Then from the ring the loop untwined, and bore  
 Inward the key with deft aim to repel  
 The firm bolts, which retiring gave a roar  
 Like a bull feeding in the field. Thus fell  
 Backward the beauteous doors, and opened to her well.

## 6

She on the high floor, where in goodly row  
Filled with sweet raiment lay the coffers, stept ;  
Thence, with her hand upreaching, took the bow  
Down from the peg, in the bright sheath well kept,  
And sitting laid it on her knees and wept  
With shrill voice, and took out the master's bow.  
But at the last, when she had freely wept,  
Back to the wide hall she made haste to go,  
Where the proud suitors held their revelries below.

## 7

Thus coming in, the curvèd bow she held  
And the large quiver with sad arrows stored.  
Also the maidens bare a coffer, filled  
With brass and steel, the prizes of their lord.  
So came the queen near to the banquet-board ;  
And by the pillar of the dome she stood,  
Screened with her lucid veil, and spake this word :  
“ Hear now, ye suitors, who for drink and food  
Lie heavy on this house, and vex my widowhood.

## 8

“ This was your pretext, and none else but this,  
To wed me. Come, behold your test of skill !  
Nor of due guerdon shall the victor miss.  
Here is my lord's bow ; feel it as ye will ;  
And from whose hand the shaft with easiest thrill  
Flies through each ring which there in order gleams,  
Him will I follow both for good and ill,  
Leaving this house which so delightful seems,  
Home to be yet remembered even in my dreams.”



## 9

Thus did she speak, and the good swineherd bade  
 Give them the bow and plant the rings in line.  
 He with a tear those arms beside them laid.  
 And, where he stood, the herdsman of the kine  
 Wept, the bow seeing of his lord divine.  
 On whom Antinous bitter scorn did heap :  
 " Fools of the passing hour, why stand and whine,  
 Boors that ye are, and make the lady weep ?  
 Is not enough that still she wails in anguish deep

## 10

" Her husband ? Feast in quiet, or go out  
 And wail your fill ; but leave the weapons here.  
 Soon will the suitors have a weary bout.  
 Nor lightly will they bend, as I much fear,  
 The burnished bow : for not a single peer,  
 Of all now present, to the brave old king  
 Stands, as I viewed him in a distant year.  
 Yea, to my mind full readily can I bring—  
 Though a mere child I was—remembrance of the king."

## 11

Thus the man spake, but hoped the while in heart  
 Himself the chord to conquer, and make fly  
 Sheer through the steely rings the barbèd dart ;  
 Yet first was fated to taste by-and-by  
 That arrow, aimed from the unerring eye  
 Of brave Odysseus—whom within the hall  
 Late he reviled and used discourteously,  
 And to like outrage did his comrades call.  
 Then said divine Telemachus among them all :

## 12

“ Now hath Kronion fooled me ; for indeed,  
Wise as she is, my mother means to go,  
Far following from my house a stranger’s lead—  
Yet in my silly soul I laugh. But lo,  
What prize, ye suitors, now the gods bestow !  
There is none like her on Achaian strand,  
In Argos or Mycene, well ye know,  
Nor in our own isle, nor the dark mainland.  
Why should I praise my mother, since all can understand ?

## 13

“ Come, fence not off with colourable guile  
This test, nor turn from stretching of the bow.  
Stand up and shoot like men ! Myself the while  
First will arise and gird me to the bow.  
And if I bend it, and the fleet shaft go  
Clean through the rings, my mother well may quit  
This mansion, nor in weakness nor in woe  
Shall I here linger, if once proven fit  
To win my father’s guerdon, and the mark to hit.”

## 14

He from his shoulders flung the mantle rich,  
Sprang to his full height, put the sword away,  
And the staves planted, having delved a ditch  
Long, straight, and roomy, stamping-in the clay,  
While all admired, such skill did he display  
At first sight. He then to the gate did move.  
Thrice the bow shuddered as he made essay ;  
Thrice he desisted, though on fire to prove  
His force, and drive the arrow through the iron groove.

## 15

And now the fourth time he had stretched the chord  
 By sheer strength, but Odysseus with his eye  
 Warned him to cease, though yearning. And this word  
 Telemachus answered: "Ye powers on high,  
 Shall then my frame be feeble? or am I  
 Too young to answer, if one strike me first?  
 Come ye the rest, and each with other vie,  
 Since, if I err not, I am found the worst—  
 Stand to the mark, and win that prize for which ye thirst."

## 16

Thus having spoken he the strife gave o'er,  
 And on the shining valves the bow did lean,  
 Then by the beauteous handle of the door  
 Rested in sight of all the arrow keen,  
 Passed, and sat down where he before had been.  
 Then said Antinous, Eupheithes' son:  
 "Stand forth in order. It were best, I ween,  
 From left to right to follow, one by one,  
 As in the feast the pouring of the wine is done."

## 17

Thus spake Antinous, and it pleased their soul.  
 And first rose up Leiodes, CEnops' son,  
 Priest of the altar, who beside the bowl  
 Sat inmost ever. He, and save him none,  
 Hated the evil by the suitors done.  
 He first, beside the threshold of the door,  
 Stood to the trial, yet by no means won  
 To bend it, ere in straining he made sore  
 The unworn delicate fingers, never used in war.

## 18

He mid the suitors spake : “ O friends, in vain  
 I strive to bend it : let some other try,  
 For now this bow shall cause our bravest pain,  
 And a deep curse on many a life sh<sup>l</sup> lie :  
 Since it is far more honourable to die  
 Than to live on and lack our hearts’ desire,  
 For which through all our days we tarrying sigh.  
 Now each within his soul conceiveth fire  
 To wed the noble consort of that kingly sire.

## 19

“ But when with force ye come to feel the bow,  
 Then of the long-robed women of the land  
 Seek out some other, and your gifts bestow.  
 So to that suitor she can yield her hand  
 Who comes the wealthiest, and by Fate’s command.”  
 He spake, and on the shining <sup>of</sup> valves did lean  
 Bow of the brave Odysseus, and made stand  
 Against the beauteous ring the arrow keen,  
 And, thence retiring, sat where he before had been.

## 20

But to the priest Antinous railing said :  
 “ What word, Leiodes, from thy lips doth fly !  
 I scorn to hear thee speak a thing so dread—  
 As if this bow must make our bravest sigh  
 And a deep curse on many a life to lie,  
 Because *thou* canst not bend it. For to thee  
 Neither the firm hand nor the archer’s eye  
 Came from thy mother. But desist, and see  
 Here of the rest how many shall victorious be.”

## 21

He spake, and turning to Melanthius said :  
“ Up, light a fire, Melanthius, and prepare  
Beside it a huge seat with fleeces spread,  
And from the stores a roll of suet bear,  
That the young men may warm it, and with care  
Rub the bow well, and strive their strife, and win.”  
He ceased. Melanthius lit the fire, and there  
Placed a huge seat with fleeces, and brought in  
The suet. They then melt it, and the work begin.

## 22

So for the combat they stood forth in line,  
From left to right still following, one by one,  
As in the feast the herald pours the wine.  
With their whole strength they struggled, yet could none  
Move it at all, nor was a murmur won  
From the tense chord ; so far they failed in might.  
Natheless divine Eurymachus held on  
And brave Antinous in the suitors' sight.  
These were their chief in virtue, and their best for fight.

## 23

But from the house the herdsman of the kine  
Went with the swineherd past the outer gate,  
And close behind them came their lord divine,  
Who in a soft voice there addressed them straight :  
“ O herdsman, and thou swineherd, how relate  
This word ?—yet no more can I brook delay.  
How would ye serve Odysseus, if high Fate  
Should send him on a sudden from far away ?  
Which would ye help, Odysseus, or the suitors ? say.”

## 24

And answer made the herdsman of the kine :  
 " Zeus Father, wouldst thou but my wish fulfil,  
 And send him hither by some fate divine,  
 Soon could one see my nerve and power and will  
 Him to defend and work the suitors ill !"  
 Likewise Eumæus to all gods made prayer  
 That wise Odysseus might return and kill  
 The suitors. Thus, when he was made aware,  
 And knew the soul of each, the king made answer there :

## 25

" See now and mark, for I myself am here,  
 Who from long sorrows, roaming earth and sea,  
 Come to mine own land in the twentieth year.  
 And of the servants I well know that ye  
 Alone desire me ; none I heard save ye  
 Pray for my coming ; and to you this day  
 The truth will I reveal, as it shall be :  
 If God subdue them, this shall be your pay—  
 Wives, wealth, and builded houses near my own for aye.

## 26

" And to Telemachus, mine own dear son,  
 Shall ye be friends and brethren evermore.  
 Thus I avow, and thus shall it be done.  
 Yet stay, for I will show one token more,  
 Clear to the eyes, that ye may read it o'er  
 And know me and believe—this ancient scar  
 Dug by the gleamy tusk of a wild boar,  
 When to Parnassus, from my land afar,  
 I with Autolycus' sons went hunting, ere the war."

## 27

Thus having said he drew the rags aside  
From the great scar, and laid it bare to view.  
They twain the mark with mute observance eyed,  
And their encircling arms about him threw,  
And o'er him wept, and kisses not a few  
Showered on his face and shoulders. Likewise he  
Showered on their hands and faces a warm dew  
Of kisses ; and the light had ceased to be,  
They weeping, but Odysseus spake reprovingly :

## 28

“ Cease now to weep, lest one come forth and see,  
And tell it in the house. Now entering go,  
One after one, I first, you after me.  
And this shall be the sign : for well I know  
All the proud suitors, this my roof below,  
Will set their souls against me, nor be fain  
To let you bring the quiver and the bow.  
But thou, divine Eumæus, quickly gain  
The weapons, nor to place them in my hands refrain.

## 29

“ And bid the women lock the doors with care,  
And if they hear dire groanings and a din  
Of tumult in our courts, let no one fare  
Forth from the shelter of the house to win  
Sight of the work, but each abide within,  
And hushed like death to her own labour see,  
While I avenge me of the suitors' sin.  
And lo, divine Philocteus, I charge thee  
Guard well the outer gates with bolt and chain and key.”

## 30

Thus having spoken, through the doors he went,  
 And the chair found where he did erst recline.  
 Also the herdsman and the swineherd went  
 Back to the mansion of their lord divine.  
 Nor would Eurymachus the bow resign,  
 But felt it over, and now here, now there,  
 Warmed it with fire : yet gave the chord no sign  
 Of yielding ; and his heart groaned with despair,  
 And in fierce grief he spake among the suitors there :

## 31

“ Now woe to me, by heaven, and woe to all !  
 Not loss of marriage I so deeply rue,  
 (Though bitterly that loss my spirit gall),  
 Since there be brides Achaian not a few  
 Both here in Ithaca and elsewhere too ;  
 But in my soul the sad reproach I fear,  
 That not one man among the suitors drew  
 Bow of divine Odysseus, or came near  
 In strength to him. Our children will cry shame to hear.”

## 32

Whereto the proud Antinous made reply :  
 “ This, O Eurymachus, shall not be so.  
 Yea, thou thyself canst tell the reason why.  
 For this day's light the god's high feast doth show,  
 Inviolable—and who could draw the bow ?  
 Nay, put it by, but let the rings all stand  
 In order till the morning : for, I trow,  
 Lives neither prince nor peasant in the land  
 Who will come hither and dare remove them with his hand.



## 33

" Now let the bearer of the cup fulfil  
 His task, to each in order ministering ;  
 So will we pour, and let the bow lie still.  
 But in the morning bid Melanthius bring  
 Goats from the herd, most fair and flourishing,  
 That to the glorious bender of the bow,  
 Phœbus Apollo, the far-darting king,  
 Thighs we may burn, and try the contest so  
 Once more, and amplest proof of our high virtue show."

## 34

He spake, and to his word the rest incline.  
 Fresh water on their hands the heralds pour,  
 Quickly the young men crown the bowls with wine,  
 And in due rank along the palace-floor  
 Bear round to each, as is the use of yore.  
 When they had poured and drunk their hearts' content,  
 Nor any man among them wished for more,  
 Uprose Odysseus, chief pre-eminent  
 In wisdom, and thus spake with subtil shrewd intent :

## 35

" Hear now, ye suitors ! most Eurymachus  
 And godlike brave Antinous I entreat,  
 Who with good reason hath now spoken thus.  
 Yea, leave it to the gods: some god, I weet,  
 Strength on the morrow as he list will mete :  
 Yet lend *me* also first the burnished bow,  
 To prove me, if in hands and arms and feet  
 Dwell the old vigour that I used to know,  
 Or wanderings and vile fare have marred me long ago."

## 36

He spake ; but all grew wroth exceedingly,  
 Fearing lest he the burnished bow should bend,  
 And in fierce scorn Antinous made reply :  
 “ Wretch, senseless utterly, and inapt to mend,  
 Art thou not satisfied that like a friend  
 Thou sitt'st among thy betters, and dost hear  
 Our talk and converse, eating without end,  
 And all the while no hungry guest comes near  
 Save thee, our words to listen and partake our cheer ?

## 37

“ Ha ! thou art wounded by the sweet red wine,  
 Bane of all those who with a throat like hell  
 Drink it, and know not reason when they dine.  
 By wine Eurytion the great Centaur fell,  
 Guest of the proud Pirithous, who did dwell  
 Among the Lapithæ. Mad with wine he wrought  
 Deeds in Pirithous' house by no means well.  
 Wrath seized the heroes, and they rushed and caught  
 Eurytion, and him thrust beyond the doors distraught,

## 38

“ Shorn miserably of nose and ears. Whence came  
 Strife between Centaurs and mankind ; but he  
 First for himself found doom by the dire flame  
 Of wine ; and I foretel the like to thee,  
 If thou the bow draw—for beyond the sea  
 King Echetus shall have thee, one who shears  
 All mortals, a less affable host than we,  
 And there good reason shalt thou find for tears.  
 Sit then, and drink in peace ; strive only with thy peers.”

## 39

And wise Penelope made answer thus :  
 “ Antinous, it is neither just nor fair  
 Guest to dishonour of Telemachus.  
 Or can you think that if the stranger there  
 Draw the great bow by sheer strength, he will bear  
 Me to his home, and claim me for his wife ?  
 Not so—nor entereth in his breast that care.  
 Nought lies in this to make your banquet rife  
 With grievance : far, far different are the terms of strife.”

## 40

To her Eurymachus made answer then :  
 “ Not such our fear ; it is no likely thing.  
 We tremble for the tongues of women and men,  
 Lest the unworthier this reproach should fling :  
 ‘ See now the dear wife of the blameless king  
 By worse men wooed, who cannot bend his bow.  
 But this poor beggar, whom mere chance doth bring,  
 Bends it with ease, and makes the arrow go [so !”  
 Clean through the rings.’ Woe worth our fame, if men speak

## 41

And answer made the wise Penelope :  
 “ Fret not, Eurymachus, for loss of fame.  
 Never can those who eat up violently  
 A good man’s wealth, usurp a noble name ;  
 Nor can this failure add new stings of blame.  
 See now, your guest is bravely built and tall,  
 Yea, and avers that from the loins he came  
 Of a good parent in a princely hall.  
 Come, let him prove the bow in presence of us all.

## 42

“For I declare it, and my word shall stand,  
 If that Apollo grant his prayer to-day,  
 And the bow yield to his prevailing hand,  
 Then from this mansion, for his virtue’s pay,  
 Robe and rich tunic shall he bear away,  
 A sword twain-edged, and sandals for his feet,  
 And spear, both dogs and men to keep at bay,  
 And he shall go wherever he thinks meet.”

Then answering spake Telemachus, her son discreet :

## 43

“There is none mightier in the isles than I,  
 Here, nor by Elis, where the chieftains sway,  
 My mother, to bestow it or deny.  
 If to my guest I give the bow this day  
 Once and for ever, who shall say me nay ?  
 Go, seek the loom and distaff, these are thine,  
 And to thy maids their works appointed weigh,  
 But not to bow nor quiver thy heart incline ;  
 Of such shall men take care, I most, the rule is mine.”

## 44

She, smit with wonder, to the house went back,  
 And in her mind the sapient counsel kept.  
 Thither the maidens followed in her track ;  
 Even to the upper chamber on she stept,  
 They following. There, withdrawn apart, she wept  
 Odysseus, as of old, her husband dear,  
 Nor closed the lamentation till she slept ;  
 For to her eyelids did Athene bear  
 Sweet slumbers, shed with rest, that might her strength repair.

## 45

Then did the noble swineherd lift the bow,  
To take it to his master. But they all  
Cried out against him with loud voice, and lo!  
One of the young men spake within the hall:  
“Wretch of a swineherd, let the weapons fall  
Right quickly, or in some lone place, I swear,  
Soon shall fleet dogs devour thee, swine and all,  
If but Apollo and the gods declare  
Their strength upon our side, and hearken to our prayer.”

## 46

He, scared with clamour, put the weapons back.  
But with loud voice Telemachus then cried:  
“Take them, old man, nor let thy pace be slack,  
Lest to thy sorrow, for my word defied,  
With stones I pelt thee to the far hill-side.  
For, were the suitors weak as thou this day,  
Soon would I miserably abate their pride,  
And drive them from our mansion a long way,  
Doomed for their evil deeds to earn an evil pay!”

## 47

He spake, and smiled the suitors, laughing low,  
Upon him, and sharp hatred ceased to bear.  
The swineherd to Odysseus took the bow,  
Called out the old nurse, and addressed her there:  
“Nurse, the prince bids thee lock the doors with care;  
And if be heard dire groanings and a din  
Of tumult in our courts, let no one fare  
Forth from the doors, but each abide within  
And to her work cleave fast, lest it be held a sin.”

## 48

He spake ; and wingless in her soul she kept  
The word, and soon the shining doors made fast.  
Forth from the house by stealth Philœtius leapt,  
Locked firm the courtyard gates, and o'er them cast  
Tough rope of byblus, from a swift ship's mast,  
Found in the porch ; then came with eager eye,  
And on the couch, whence he had lately passed,  
Sat, gazing ever on his lord divine,  
And deeply mused in soul, and waited for the sign.

## 49

Meantime the king was handling the great bow,  
Turning it round, now this way and now that,  
To prove it, if the horn or timber show  
Print of the worm. They, marvelling much thereat,  
Spake one to other, leaning as they sat :  
“ Surely the rogue some pilfering expert is  
In bows and arrows, which by fraud he gat—  
Or would the varlet mould a bow like this ?  
So featly doth he feel it with his hands, I wis.”

## 50

Then did another of the young men say :  
“ Now for the future may his profit be  
No larger than the luck he finds to-day !  
Wait but a little while, and we shall see  
If the great bow will yield to such as he.”  
Thus spake the suitors in their foolish scorn.  
But wary-wise Odysseus curiously  
Eyed the great bow, and all through wood and horn  
Found it a perfect weapon and worthy to be borne.

## 51

As when a lyrist, who sweet song doth know,  
Round a new peg the twisted gut doth hang  
And strain it to the pitch, so he the bow  
Strung without pain, and gave the nerve a twang ;  
And in a low tone beautifully it sang,  
Voiced like a swallow. Then the suitors all  
Deep in their spirits felt a piercing pang,  
And each man's face changed colour in the hall ;  
And in the height Zeus thundered, as a sign to all.

## 52

Much did Odysseus in his soul rejoice,  
For that the son of deep-wiled Kronos sent  
Thunder, the omen of his glorious voice.  
Then from the table a bare shaft he hent ;  
But in the quiver all the rest lay pent,  
Soon to be tasted by the Achaian crew.  
He the fleet shaft against the centre leant,  
And laid the notch upon the nerve, and drew.  
Straight flew the dart and pierced the iron rings all through.

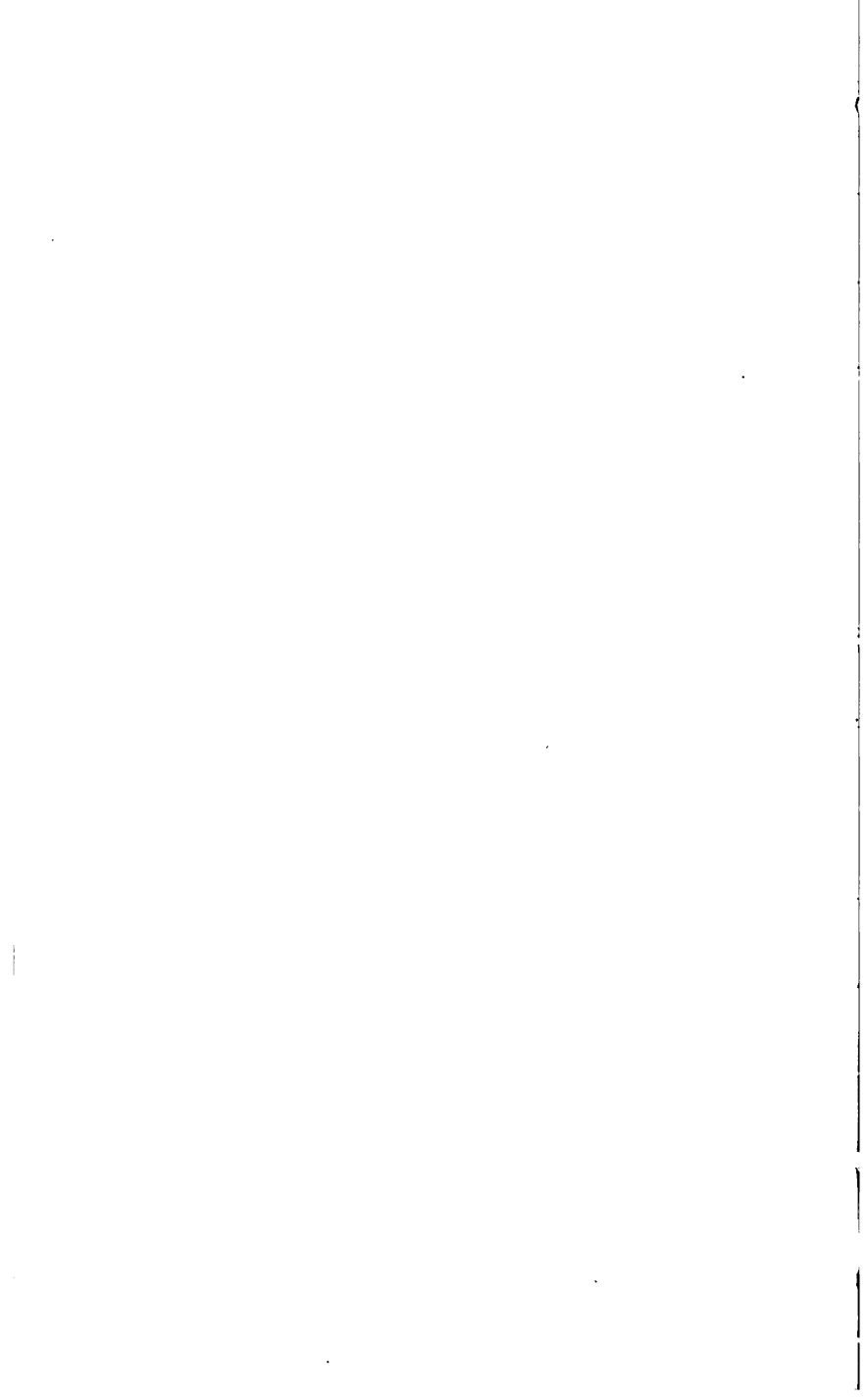
## 53

Where he was sitting, there the chord he strained,  
Not moving from his place. The arrow passed  
Clean through the rings, and in the wall remained,  
As through the first so even through the last.  
"Telemachus," he cried, "no slur I cast  
On thee my host : behold the mark is hit,  
Hit without labour ! the old strength cleaves fast  
Upon me, and my bones are stourly knit—  
Not as the suitors mock me in their scornful wit.

## 54

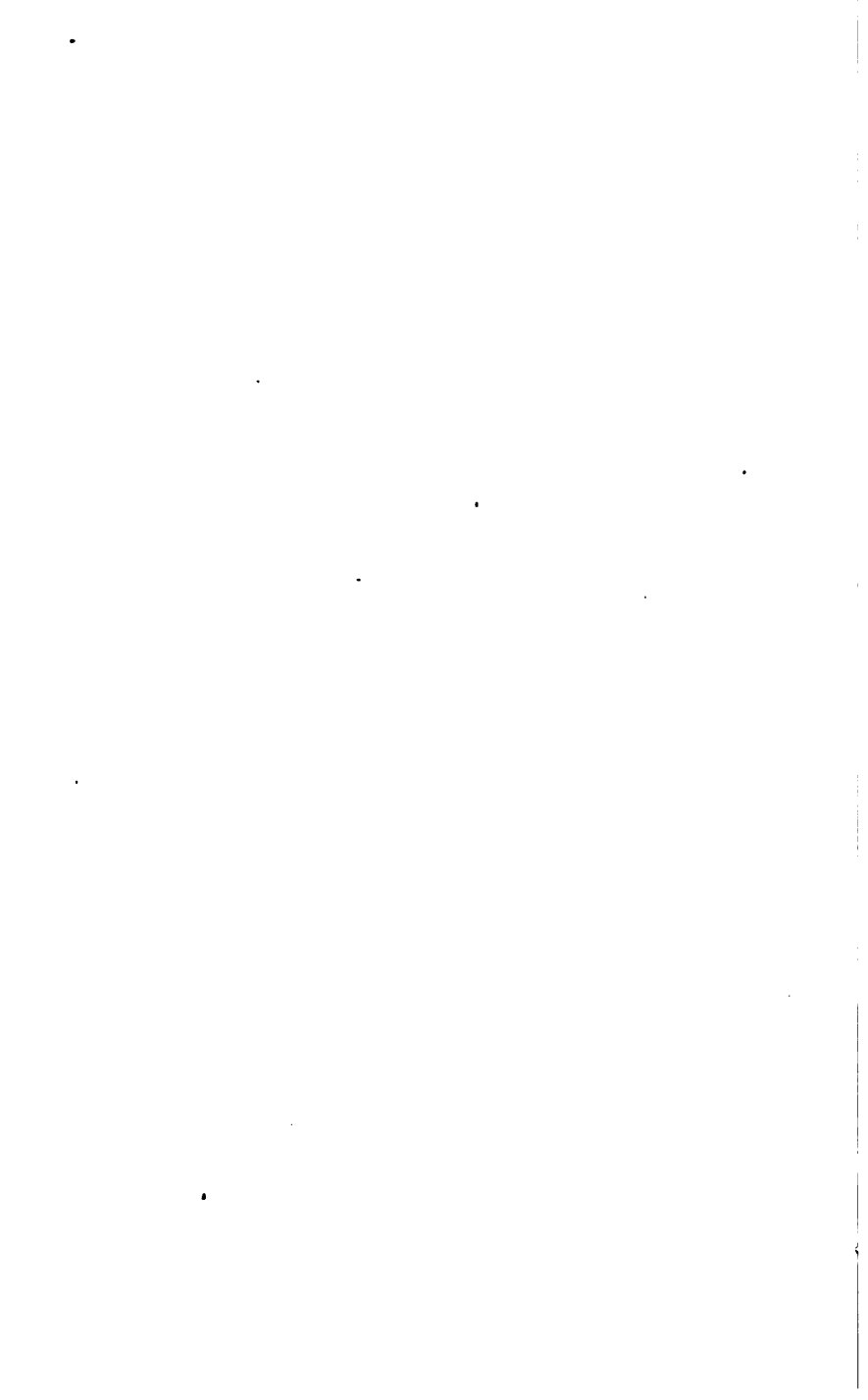
“ Now is it time their evening meal to set  
Before the Achaians, ere the sun go down.  
And other entertainment shall come yet,  
Dance and the song, which are the banquet’s crown.”  
He spake, and with his eyebrows curved the frown.  
Seizing his sword and spear Telemachus came,  
Son of Odysseus, chief of high renown,  
And, helmeted with brass like fiery flame,  
Stood by his father’s throne and waited the dire aim.





# BOOK XXII.

THE SLAYING OF THE SUITORS.



## BOOK XXII.

### 1

STRIPT of his rags then leapt the godlike king  
On the great threshold, in his hand the bow  
And quiver, filled with arrows of mortal sting.  
These with a rattle he rained down below,  
Loose at his feet, and spake among them so :  
“ See, at the last our matchless bout is o'er !  
Now for another mark, that I may know  
If I can hit what none hath hit before,  
And if Apollo hear me in the prayers I pour ! ”

### 2

Thus did he speak, and aimed a bitter dart  
Against Antinous. He the beauteous cup,  
Twin-eared and golden, carved with curious art,  
Was lifting in his hands and tilting up  
Close to his red lips, the sweet wine to sup,  
And in his mind of murder held no care.  
Who could believe, mid feast and flowing cup,  
One of a crowd, though he far mightier were,  
Would for a guest black fate and evil death prepare ?

## 3

Him with an arrow in his throat the king  
Shot. Through his delicate neck the barb made way.  
He, falling backward, made the pavement ring.  
Down clanged the cup, and where it clanged it lay.  
And, ere a man could wonder or gainsay,  
Blood from the nostrils the wide floor imbrued.  
He in a moment wildly kicked away  
The table with both feet, and spilt the food,  
And all the place with bread and broken flesh was strewed.

## 4

And now, behold, the suitors a dire clang  
Stirred in the palace, when they marked him fall.  
And from the benches and the chairs they sprang,  
Pale and aghast within the shadowy hall,  
Peering about in terror from wall to wall.  
Nor, as they looked, could they discern within  
Spear, sword, nor shield, nor any arms at all.  
Scared as from sleep, and with a troublous din,  
They to divine Odysseus wrathful words begin :

## 5

“Stranger, not well thou doest to aim at men.  
These are thy last lists ; thou shalt surely die.  
See, by thy hand the bravest of our men,  
Flower of all Ithaca, doth murdered lie.  
Thy bones the vultures shall pick by and by.”  
But each held back, averring that he slew  
By chance the man. How fatal and how nigh  
Death’s snares were set, they foolish never knew !  
Whom the king sternly eyed, and to the godless crew :

## 6

“Dogs, ye denied that I should e'er come back  
 From Troia's people to my native land.  
 Long in your pride my house ye rend and wrack,  
 Yea, and ye force the women with violent hand,  
 And my wife claim while I on earth yet stand,  
 Nor fear the gods who rule in the wide sky,  
 Nor lest a mortal on the earth demand  
 Your price of guilt—and ye are like to die!  
 Round you Death's fatal toils inextricably lie.”

## 7

[tie]

He ceased, and all were taken with pale fear,  
 Peering about in terror, if they might flee  
 Black doom and ruin and destruction sheer.  
 Then spake Eurymachus, and only he:  
 “If thou the Ithacan Odysseus be,  
 Now home returning to thy native land,  
 Well hast thou spoken: for I know that we  
 Oft in thy town and fields with violent hand,  
 And here within thy mansion, have much evil planned.

## 8

“But now behold he lieth dead, the cause  
 Of all our crime, Antinous. He alone  
 Urged us to drink and revel and break the laws—  
 He in his heart, it is a thing well known,  
 Caring far less to make thy wife his own  
 Than for a scheme, which Zeus doth bring to nought,  
 That here the king's line might be overthrown;  
 Yea, for thy child a secret snare he wrought,  
 And for himself in Ithaca the kingdom sought.

## 9

“ Now hath he fallen by the doom of Fate.  
 But spare thy people, who in after day  
 Swear in this country on thy will to wait,  
 And in thy palace the whole price to pay  
 Of all things drunk and eaten, and to lay  
 Each one before thy feet fines worth a score  
 Of oxen, brass, and gold, whate’er we may,  
 Till thy heart warms to view the countless store.  
 Reason enough thou hast to feel enraged before.”

## 10

Him wise Odysseus sternly eyed, and spake :  
 “ Eurymachus, though ye the whole restore,  
 And all your own wealth and your fathers’ take,  
 And the earth ransack till ye add much more,  
 Never these hands shall the dire work give o’er  
 Ere your flown pride is to the full repaid.  
 Choose now to fight, or if ye list explore  
 Some byway, if escape may yet be made.  
 But, as I think, Death’s toils no longer ye evade.”

## 11

Then quailed their knees and heart, and thus again  
 Eurymachus spake forth : “ O friends, the man  
 Will not give over till we all are slain.  
 Quick draw your knives, and pile up as ye can  
 Tables to cover us. It were best we ran  
 All in close volley against him, firm to try  
 And thrust him by the strength of all our clan  
 Down from the doors, and stir a public cry.  
 Then quickly his last arrow will the man let fly.”

## 12

Then he his knife drew, and with terrible cry  
Sprang toward the king; who, aiming at the breast,  
Hard by the nipple, let the arrow fly;  
And in his liver the keen barb found rest.  
Dropt from his hand the knife. He with prone chest  
Fell like a ruin, and threw down the meat  
And the rich wine-cup. His tall forehead's crest  
Knocked on the earth, he rattling with both feet  
The throne, and on his eyes the darkling death-rain beat.

## 13

Then rushed Amphinomus onward with drawn knife,  
To thrust Odysseus from the doors, but lo!  
First with the spear Telemachus reft his life,  
And 'twixt the shoulders made the iron go  
Clean through the lungs; and with a clang the foe  
Knocked with his forehead on the earth. Back pressed  
Telemachus, the long spear leaving so,  
Lest, from the wound when he the spear would wrest,  
One cut him down unwares, or stab him breast to breast.

## 14

Now therefore running to his sire came he,  
And in winged words: "O father, I will seek  
Helm, shield, and two spears both for thee and me  
And these our helpers, lest we prove too weak.  
Not without arms can we our vengeance wreak."  
And wary-wise Odysseus made reply:  
"Pause not a moment: if thou tarry and speak,  
Soon will the river of our darts run dry.  
Quick, lest the men dislodge me—all alone am I."



## 15

Thus spake he, and Telemachus obeyed,  
And to the chamber went where the arms lay.  
He from the armoury four shields conveyed,  
Eight spears, four helms of brass in plumed array,  
And to his father quickly bent his way.  
He first the armour round his flesh put on ;  
Also the servants to his word obey,  
And the spears lift, and shield and helmet don,  
And by the brave Odysseus take their stand anon.

## 16

But the brave king, while yet his shafts availed,  
This one and that kept piercing in the hall.  
Still the men dropt. But when the arrows failed,  
Then he the bow leaned on the shining wall,  
And on his shoulders took the targe withal,  
Four-hided, vast, and on his valiant head  
Laced the firm helmet with its streamy fall  
Of horsehair and the white plume dancing dread ;  
And two strong spears he lifted, each with steely head.

## 17

Now in the wall a narrow postern lay,  
Which from the corner of the threshold-floor  
Gave, through fair valves, upon a secret way.  
And the king bade the swineherd keep this door  
Standing on watch : there was no pass-way more.  
And thither Agelaus turned his eye,  
And to his comrades a fierce counsel bore :  
“ Friends, why not pass the wicket, and stir a cry ?  
Then quickly his last arrow shall the man let fly.”

## 18

Melanthius, herdsman of the goats, replied :

“ O Zeus-born Agelaus, it may not be.

Yon gates stand direly near, close at the side,

And the lane's mouth is narrow, and you may see

That one strong man might hold it easily.

But come now, quickly will I hence and bring

Arms to your service from the armoury.

For, as I think, Telemachus and the king

Stowed not the arms elsewhere, but there laid everything.”

## 19

Thus having said, Melanthius quickly went,

Up the long staircase stealing, to the place.

Twelve shields, twelve helmets, and twelve spears he hent,

And to the suitors brought them down apace.

Then was Odysseus in an evil case,

And quailed in knees and heart, as they put on

Their armour, and long spears before his face

Waved : for he saw that a great work was done.

And quickly in winged words he spake unto his son :

## 20

“ Not all, Telemachus, goes well with us.

Some one against us moveth evil war,

Either a woman or Melanthius.”

But he : “ The rest, O father, blameless are,

But that I left the chamber-door ajar

Mine is the fault ; they had the better scout.

Haste, good Eumæus, and the chamber bar,

And if a woman be at work find out,

Or Dolius' son Melanthius, whom I shrewdly doubt.”

## 21

Thus they conferred, and lo, Melanthius passed  
Back to the chamber, the fair arms to bring.  
And on the man quick glance the swineherd cast,  
And, as he stood near, whispered to the king :  
“ Son of Laertes, hearken ! for the thing  
Comes true—once more that dark thief prowls away.  
Say, shall I kill him if I can, or bring  
The varlet hither, for all crimes to pay  
Which he within thy house hath planned this many a day ? ”

## 22

And wary-wise Odysseus answering said :  
“ I and Telemachus will hold at bay  
All the proud foes, though burning to make head ;  
But ye twain to the chamber take your way ;  
There backward twist, as tightly as ye may,  
His hands and feet, then cast him on the floor  
Bound, a rope draw beneath his arms, and weigh  
And hoist him to the beam, and lock the door—  
There to feel bitter things long time ere life be o'er.”

## 23

So spake he, and they heard him and obeyed.  
And all unseen they stole upon him there,  
While in the far recess deep search he made ;  
They twain on each side by the door-posts were.  
He carrying in one hand a helmet fair  
Came ; in the other a broad buckler lay,  
Which in his youth divine Laertes bare,  
Now battered and burnt up with long decay,  
And the old loops hung limp, their dry seams dropt away.

## 24

And lo, the twain rushed forward and him drew  
 Back to the chamber by his hair, and cast  
 Sore groaning to the ground, and backward threw  
 His hands and feet, and linked them direly fast  
 With knots of spirit-piercing cord, and passed  
 Under his limbs a stout rope, as the king  
 Commanded, and by main strength at the last  
 Hoised him aloft, beneath the beam to swing—  
 Whom with sharp words, Eumæus, thou didst jeer and sting:

## 25

“Now, O Melanthius, if I err not quite,  
 Where thou reclinest thou art like to be,  
 Brisk and alert, through all the livelong night,  
 Wrapt in a soft couch as is good for thee.  
 Nor shall the Morning, when from out the sea  
 She comes up charioted, with golden throne,  
 Escape thine eyes ere well awake are we,  
 While for the suitors thou art driving down  
 Choice fatlings from the herd, and prime goats not their own.”

## 26

Thus bound they leave him, and then swiftly win  
 Back to Odysseus. Breathing might they four  
 Stood by the threshold, and the rest within,  
 So many and brave. And near them at the door  
 Came one who Mentor's voice and likeness bore.  
 Glad spake Odysseus: “Shield us from the foe,  
 Brave Mentor!—I was thy twin friend of yore.”  
 Thus spake he, nor Athene failed to know.  
 And Agelaus then, Damastor's son, spake so:

## 27

“Mentor, be thou not fooled to take their part !  
Else are we minded, when our foes we slay,  
Thee to kill also for thine evil heart ;  
Yea, with thine own head thou the price shalt pay.  
When with the sword we take your power away,  
All that within doors and without is thine  
We will make even as this man’s, I say.  
Nor son nor daughter nor thy wife divine  
Shall linger in the land, nor any of thy line.”

## 28

He ended, and Athene raged the more,  
And in fierce accents to the king she spake :  
“Not such thine arm, Odysseus, as of yore,  
When for the nobly-born fair Helen’s sake  
Nine years by Troia thou didst war partake,  
And in the dread siege many men subdue,  
And by shrewd wit the towers of Priam break.  
How with house, wealth, and all sweet things in view,  
Turnest thou back from blood, nor canst the work go through ?

## 29

“But come, beloved, and stand near me thus,  
And mid the fierce throng shalt thou soon behold  
In what way Mentor, child of Alkimus,  
Pays back the kindness of his friends fourfold.”  
She spake, nor yet full tide of victory rolled  
Before them, but Odysseus and his son  
Proved yet a little, lest their blood were cold.  
She, to the roof-beam taking flight anon,  
There like a swallow sat, and from above looked on.

## 30

And Agelaus then, Damastor's son,  
Urged on the rest, with bold Eurynomus  
Hot for the battle, and Amphimedon,  
And the brave strength of Demoptolemus,  
Peisander, and the warlike Polybus.  
These of the suitors who yet lived and fought  
Were far the bravest and most glorious ;  
But many others the fleet shafts had brought  
To bale. And Agelaus a fierce counsel taught :

## 31

“ Friends, soon that madman shall yield up the ghost.  
See; they are left beside the doors alone,  
And gone is Mentor with an empty boast.  
Now therefore, suitors, hurl not all in one  
Your spears against them, but let six come on  
And first in order at our foe take aim,  
If haply Zeus vouchsafe that we strike down  
Odysseus, and acquire a noble name,  
Since all the rest count nothing, if that man we tame.”

## 32

So they stood forth and hurled, but none the more  
Thrived, for Athene sent their javelins wide.  
One hit the pillar, and one hit the door,  
And one fell heavy on the wall aside.  
Then to his friends divine Odysseus cried :  
“ Come, let us also hurl our spears, nor miss  
Yon crowd of suitors, who, by Heaven ! have tried  
Now to their past crimes to add even this,  
And make the barb-tipt iron in our life-blood hiss.”

## 33

He spake, and all then, firming well their eye,  
 Aimed the long spears ; and Demoptolemus  
 Low by the javelin of the king did lie ;  
 Euryades fell by Telemachus ;  
 And by the swineherd's steel died Elatus ;  
 The herdsman of the kine Peisander slew.  
 These with their teeth the bloody ground bit thus ;  
 And, while the suitors far apart withdrew,  
 Straight rushed the four, and tugged their weapons forth anew.

## 34

And lo, the suitors their sharp spears once more  
 Hurled ; but Athene sent the most part wide.  
 One hit the pillar, and one hit the door,  
 And one fell heavy on the wall aside.  
 Natheless Amphimedon with blood just dyed  
 Skin of the wrist of brave Odysseus' son.  
 Ctesippus, hurling o'er the tough bull's-hide,  
 Wrote on the swineherd's shoulder—so passed on  
 The dart, and flew beyond him, and to earth fell down.

## 35

Then did Odysseus and his friends renew  
 Their hurling, and among the crowd shot thus—  
 Stormer of towns, the brave Odysseus, slew  
 Eurydamas ; and young Telemachus  
 Amphimedon ; the swineherd, Polybus.  
 The herdsman hit Ctesippus in the breast,  
 And cried : “ No longer vaunt and flee at us,  
 But let the gods speak, who are far the best.  
 This for the foot thou gavest to the suppliant guest ! ”

## 36

Also in close fight with his spear the king  
Tore Agelaus ; the young prince his spear  
Drave through Leiocritus. He ruining  
Clanged with his forehead. And Athene there  
Waved her man-murdering ægis in the air.  
Then, scared in spirit, through the hall they fled,  
As when the gadfly, in the spring of the year,  
When the days lengthen, mid the kine makes head,  
And stings them into fury where at peace they fed.

## 37

And as when eagles, curven-beaked and strong,  
Fly from the hills and the fleet birds assail ;  
These in the low plain fit and cower along,  
Pounced on with fury, nor can flight avail  
Nor courage, while good sport the fowlers hail—  
So mid the suitors hovering evermore,  
Turning about they smite them, and deal bale.  
Direly the heads crashed, and a hideous roar  
Sounded for ever, and still the bubbling earth ran gore.

## 38

Then did Leiodes clasp Odysseus' knees  
And in winged words his supplication make :  
“ Spare me, O king, nor let my suit displease !  
Since never to the women I did nor spake  
Evil, but strove the lawless ways to break  
Of these proud men ; but they regarded not,  
And for their folly a fit doom partake.  
I, the mere altar-priest, now share their lot,  
Though clean of guilt—so soon are benefits forgot.”



## 39

Him wise Odysseus sternly eyed, and said :  
 “ Priest of *their* altar if thou boast to be,  
 Then for my death thou must have often prayed,  
 And that my sweet return I might not see,  
 And that my dear wife should bear sons to thee—  
 Die!” Thus he answered, and the sword did take,  
 Dropt by Damastor’s child when slain was he,  
 Shore through the mid neck, and the neck-bones brake ;  
 And the head rolled beneath him, while the mouth yet spake.

## 40

But yet the minstrel Phemius shunned black Fate,  
 Who by compulsion to the suitors sang.  
 Mute he stood, lingering by the postern-gate,  
 And there the shrill lyre from his hands let hang.  
 And his soul mused if it were best he sprang  
 Forth from the house, and to the altar clave  
 Of court-guard Zeus, to shun the dire death-pang,  
 Where often from old time fat thighs they gave,  
 Or to rush forth, and mercy at the king’s knees crave.

## 41

And in his soul it seemed more gainful so—  
 To pass forth from his place, and at the knees  
 Fall, and wild hands of supplication throw,  
 Crouching before the lord Laértiades.  
 First he lays down the lyre, where space he sees  
 Betwixt the bowl and silver-studded throne,  
 Then rushes forth, and to Odysseus’ knees  
 Clings with a sore clasp, crouched on the cold stone.  
 There sadly in winged words he maketh suppliant moan :

## 42

“ Spare me, Odysseus, lest a time come when  
Fall on thine own heart sorrow, if thou kill  
Me, the self-taught, who sing to gods and men.  
Not man, but God, did my sweet voice instil.  
Thee too with songs can I divinely thrill.  
O let me live ! Telemachus can say  
How not desiring, and with no goodwill,  
I came to sing amid their feasts : but they,  
Far mightier and far more, compelled me to obey.”

## 43

He ceased ; and the divine Telemachus  
Heard the man's suppliant anguish, and came near,  
And in winged words addressed his father thus :  
“ Hold, and the guiltless wound not, but revere.  
Also the herald Medon hold we clear,  
Who the good cause did never once forget,  
But loved me from a child this many a year—  
If nor Philcetus nor the swineherd yet  
Have slain him, nor thee raging through the house he met.”

## 44

Him the wise Medon heard, where 'neath a throne,  
Wrapt in a raw bull's-hide, he crouching lay,  
Black Fate avoiding. Forth he leapt anon,  
Cast off the hide, and by his knees did pray  
Telemachus : “ Behold me, friend, and stay  
Thine arm, and tell thy father to forbear,  
Lest me, exulting in his strength, he slay,  
And angered for these men, who nought did spare ;  
Who for thyself, his child, had no regard nor care.”

## 45

On whom the wise Odysseus smiled and said :  
 "Cheer up, and live, for thou hast heard his will,  
 This to know ever, and thy friends persuade—  
 How 'tis far better to do good than ill.  
 But now go forth and in the court sit still,  
 Clear of the blood, beyond the doors, ye two,  
 And leave me in the house while I fulfil  
 The remnant of the work I have to do."  
 They to the altar went, and crouching quailed anew.

## 46

Meanwhile the king pried busily to and fro,  
 Lest one alive yet lurk, avoiding bale.  
 And all he found in bloody dust laid low,  
 Strewn, like dumb fishes on the sandy graile,  
 Whom from the hoary deep the fishers hale  
 In many-windowed net. They on dry land,  
 Sick for the sea, gasp dying ; nor doth fail  
 Fierce noon to kill them on the burning sand—  
 Thus lay the slain men heaped by his victorious hand.

## 47

Then to his dear son spake Odysseus there :  
 "My son, the old nurse Eurycleia call.  
 Somewhat I have which I would fain declare."  
 He spake ; Telemachus obeyed withal,  
 And the door moved, exclaiming from the hall :  
 "Come down, old woman, born of ancient day !  
 Thou to whose care within our house doth fall  
 The guardianship of women, come this way !  
 Quick, for my father calls, who somewhat hath to say."

## 48

He spake, and wingless in her soul she kept  
The king's word, and the wide valves open threw  
And came. Telemachus before her stept.  
There, girt with corpses whom his own arm slew,  
She found Odysseus, very dire to view,  
With smears of onset foully clotted o'er,  
And his fair limbs defiled with murder's dew,  
Like to a lion who stalks red with gore,  
Fleshed with a grass-fed bullock whom he seized and tore.

## 49

As he with both cheeks and his tawny breast  
Comes soaked in slaughter, hideous to be seen,  
Such were Odysseus' hands and feet and chest,  
And such the terror of his eyes and mien.  
She then, beholding the wide floor unclean,  
Strewn with the fallen suitors' bloody rout,  
When she perceived that a great work had been,  
Stood pale with triumph, and in act to shout.  
But the wise king restrained her, ere the cry came out :

## 50

“Nurse, with a mute heart this my vengeance hail!  
Not holy is it o'er the slain to boast.  
These Heaven and their own crimes have brought to bale;  
Since of all strangers, from earth's every coast,  
No man was honoured of this godless host,  
Nor good nor evil, whomso'er they knew—  
And with their souls they pay the fatal cost.  
But of the women, come now, tell me true,  
Which keep a sinless spirit, and which evil do.”

## 51

She answered: "Hear now what is in thy thought.  
Fifty maid-servants in thy mansion stay  
Tending the house, whom we their works have taught,  
Fleeces to card and bear the servile day.  
Twelve are quite shameless, and no reverence pay  
To me, nor even to Penelope.  
Nor, when thy dear son's childhood passed away,  
Durst he against the women aught decree,  
Since the wise queen his mother willed it not to be.

## 52

"But let me to the chamber hence, and tell  
Thy wife, on whom some god doth slumber pour."  
But he: "To wake her were by no means well.  
Go, call the women who did wrong before."  
Then the old nurse along the palace-floor  
Passed for the women. But the chief divine,  
Now that his bloody work was wholly o'er,  
His son called, and the keeper of the kine,  
And swineherd, and to them this charge did he consign:

## 53

"Take now the dead forth, and the maids compel.  
Then with fresh water and fine sponges clean  
Tables and thrones, till it be all done well.  
But when the fair house is in order seen,  
Lead out the guilt-stained women, and between  
The high dome and enclosure of the court  
Smite them and slay them with your broadswords keen,  
Till they forget for ever their dearling sport,  
Which with bad men they knew, sweet, secret, and too  
short."

## 54

Thus he commanded, and the women all  
Came in a crowd together, wailing sore  
And weeping, and the dead bare from the hall,  
And laid them in the porch, beside the door,  
One on the other leaning, foul with gore.  
There stood the king directing what was done,  
And they the slain men by compulsion bore.  
But from the vestibule they came anon,  
And with fine sponges cleansed each table, bench, and throne.

## 55

The prince, the herdsman, and the swineherd then  
Scraped the fair pavement, and the women cast  
Their gory scourings from the house. But when  
All was now done, they took the handmaids last,  
And twixt the high dome and the court, where passed  
A strait lane, shut them up, whence none might flee.  
Then said the wise prince, having shut them fast :  
“ Not by a clean death should these ended be,  
Who with the suitors slept, and mocked the queen and me.”

## 56

He spake, and hawser of a blue-prowed ship  
Down from high pillar of the dome he let,  
Fastened aloft, lest too near earth they dip.  
As doves or long-winged thrushes on a net  
Strike in a thick bush, when to bed they get,  
And find ill roosting where they nightly throng,  
So were their heads caught, and the nooses set  
Fast round their necks, to make their misery strong,  
And with their feet they writhed a little while, not long.

## 57

Then to the courtyard they Melanthius draw,  
Lop with the knife his nose and ears, and cast  
His manhood to the dogs, to eat up raw,  
And his limbs dock with iron—for so vast  
Burned the grim wrath within them. At the last,  
Washed in pure water, and with hands and feet  
Clean from the red gore, to the king they passed ;  
And all was over, and the work complete.  
Then he in wingèd words addressed the dame discreet :

## 58

“Quickly, O nurse, bring fire that I may burn  
Sulphur, the cure of ills, and bid the queen  
Come with her maids, and let the rest return.”  
She answered : “ Rightly hast thou judged, I ween ;  
But let me bring rich robe and tunic clean ;  
Nor with vile rags about thy shoulders wide  
Stand thus disfigured in thy form and mien.”  
But wary-wise Odysseus quick replied :  
“ First of all now bring sulphur, and the fire provide.”

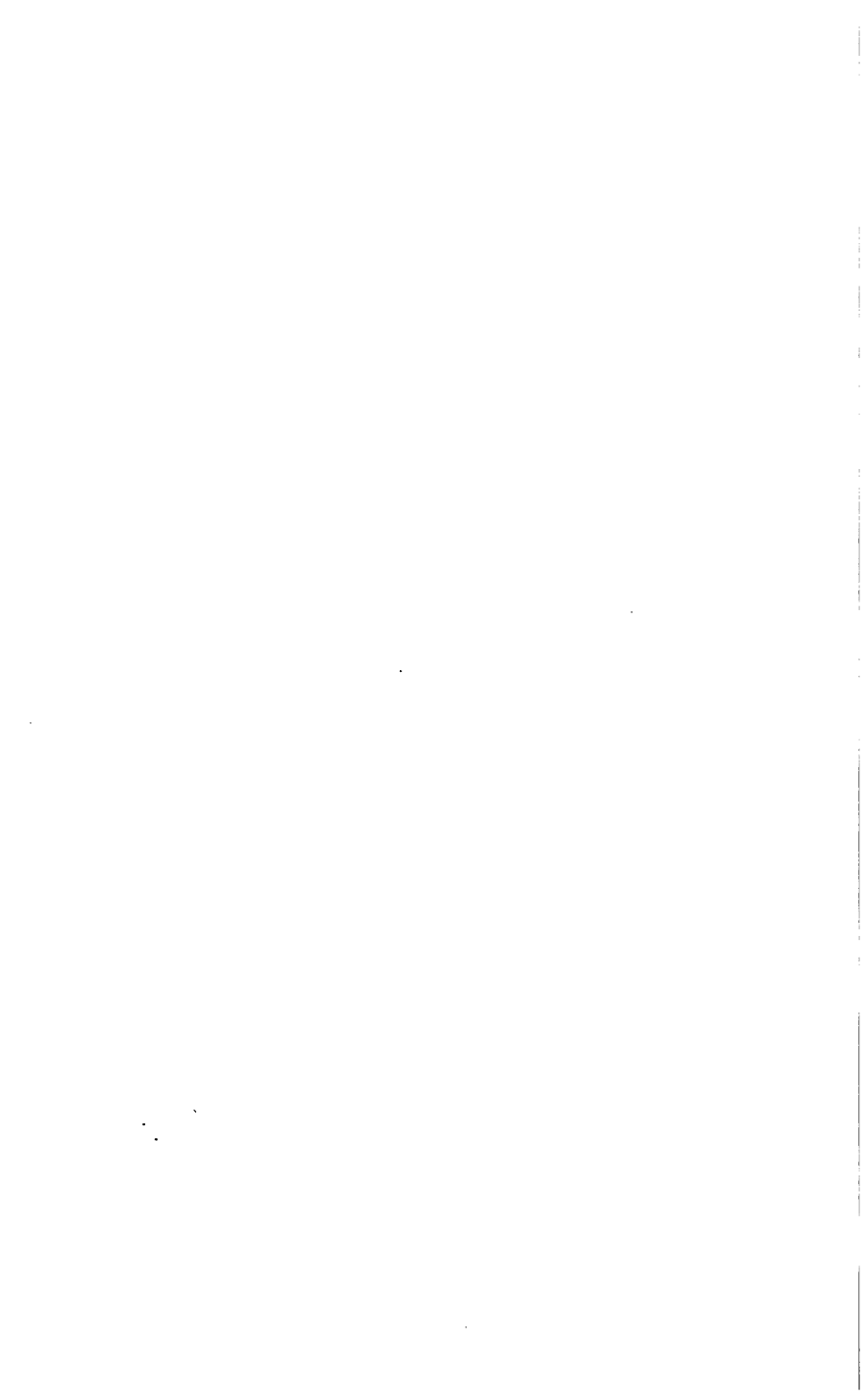
## 59

He spake, and swiftly she obeyed, and brought  
Sulphur and fire, and he made pure and sweet  
All the wide space wherein the fight was fought.  
Then for the women went the nurse discreet.  
These come with torches, and Odysseus greet,  
Pouring wild kisses on his face and head  
- And shoulders, and him lovingly entreat,  
His strong hands clasping. And sweet tears they shed,  
Wailing aloud together, and he their faces read.

**B O O K   X X I I I .**

**ODYSSEUS DISCOVERS HIMSELF TO PENELOPE.**





## BOOK XXIII.

---

1

UP-STAIRS the nurse tript, laughing in her soul,  
To tell the queen her husband was within.  
Her knees were strengthened, and her feet made whole,  
Swift as in youth, and she did thus begin :  
“ Wake up, Penelope, and sweet sight win  
Of that which thou hast longed for all thy life ;  
For now, though late, Odysseus hath come in  
And slain the suitors, who with plague so rife  
Daily devoured his wealth, and vexed his child and wife.”

2

But her the wise Penelope addressed :  
“ Dear nurse, the gods have sent thee raving mad,  
Who oft to folly turn the prudent breast,  
And the mind heal which no direction had.  
These warp thy judgment, which was once not bad.  
Why thus arouse me, whelmed in grief too sore,  
Vain things to prate, and make me yet more sad ?  
Ah me ! such sleep I never knew before  
As now some pitying god did on mine eyelids pour.

## 3

"Not to mine eyelids a like sleep there came  
 From the dark hour Odysseus went away  
 To that bad Ilion, which let no one name!  
 But go back, leave me, and without delay;  
 For if another woman had come this day  
 Vain things to prate, and spoil me of my sleep,  
 Roughly would I her thankless zeal repay,  
 Driving her down again with cause to weep—  
 But for thyself herein let old age pardon reap."

## 4

Her Eurycleia, the dear nurse, addressed:  
 "Child, I not mock thee. In mere sober deed  
 Odysseus hath returned, and now doth rest  
 Safe on his own hearth, as the gods decreed.  
 He is that stranger, full of years and need,  
 Whom the young men dishonoured in the hall;  
 And thy son knew it, but gave prudent heed  
 None of his counsels to reveal at all,  
 Till the whole godless rout his father should make fall."

## 5

Then joyed the queen, and leaping from her bed  
 Fell on the nurse's neck with many a tear,  
 And at the last in wingèd words she said:  
 "Yet tell the truth, kind nurse, and show me clear—  
 If, as thou sayest, he indeed be here,  
 How did he lay hands on that shameless crowd?  
 Methinks that one man were not much to fear,  
 Matched against these, so many and so proud;  
 Still were they all together, with huge strength endowed."

## 6

And the dear nurse in answer spake this word :  
“ Nothing I saw, and nothing have been told,  
Only a noise of dying groans I heard.  
We, in the well-built chambers kept in hold,  
Sat mute, bewildered, by our fears controlled,  
With the firm doors around us folded fast.  
Thus we sat huddling, and our blood ran cold,  
Till that Telemachus thy child at last  
Thence called me to his father, and I quickly passed.

## 7

“ There I beheld Odysseus ringed with slain,  
High in the midst, and on the hard-paved ground  
Spread the thick corpses ; yea, thy heart were fain  
Him like a lion to behold half-drowned  
In slaughter. And beyond the threshold's bound  
All are now piled, he steaming the wide hall  
With sulphur. Come quick, for thy lord hath found  
Both wife and child, and the proud suitors fall.  
After long woes take heart ; thy wish, thou hast it all !”

## 8

“ Boast not thyself,” she said, “ dear nurse, to-day !  
All would that dear news gladden, but far most  
My child and me. Things are not as ye say.  
But now a god wreaks on this sinful host  
Their deeds of evil. Very well thou know'st,  
No man they honoured, whomso'er they knew,  
Nor good nor evil—let them bear the cost !  
But my dear husband never more can view  
Land of his own Achaia ; for the Fates him slew.”

## 9

Again the dear nurse Eurycleia spake :  
 " My child, what fell words from thy lips depart,  
 Who saidst thy husband can no more come back,  
 And he within ! Thou hast a faithless heart.  
 Yea, this clear sign can I indeed impart.  
 Scar of the gleamy tusk of a wild boar  
 I spied, and would have told thee, but with art  
 He held me, washing—if I lie, then pour  
 My life out at thy feet in misery the most sore !"

## 10

Answered in turn the sage Penelope :  
 " Dear nurse, the counsels of the gods to spy,  
 Though much thou knowest, is too hard for thee.  
 But we will seek together, thou and I,  
 At least my child, that we may there descry  
 All the slain suitors, and who smote them dead."  
 So went she ; but with doubt the heart surged high,  
 Whether aloof to test him, or to shed  
 Warm tears, and clasp his hands, and kiss the face and head.

## 11

So when she entered and the threshold passed,  
 She in the firelight, by the further wall,  
 Sat the king fronting. He, with eyes downcast,  
 Leaned in his place against the pillar tall,  
 Expecting if his wife some word let fall,  
 When she had seen him with her eyes. Long space  
 Mute she remained, he wondering much withal.  
 One time she looked upon him, face to face ;  
 One time she knew him not, clothed in such evil case.

## 12

Sharply Telemachus then spake, and said :

“ Mother, bad mother, and with hardened heart,  
Why shun my father, who once shared thy bed,  
And not sit near him, and in talk have part ?

Lives not another wife so blunt of heart,

Herself to sunder from a husband dear,

Who from long toil, and pierced with sorrow's smart,

Comes to his own land in the twentieth year.

But, as it seems, thy breast than stone is more severe.”

## 13

And sage Penelope in answer spake :

“ Stunned is my spirit, and my brain seems wild.

Nought can I speak to him, no question make,

Nor even look him in the eyes, dear child.

But if indeed ye are not all beguiled,

If my Odysseus hath at last returned,

Then lightly can we twain stand reconciled ;

For there be true marks, readily discerned

Betwixt us, secret signs, which no one else hath learned.”

## 14

She ceasing, smiled the suffering chief divine,

And in winged words Telemachus addressed :

“ Leave now thy mother here to prove each sign ;

Soon will she know me better in her breast.

Now that I seem poor, and am foully drest,

She casts it in my teeth I am not he.

But come now, let us see which way were best ;

Since there is much cause both for thee and me

To take thought of the morrow, that our lives go free.

## 15

“ For in a people if one chance to kill  
But one man only, who avengers few  
Leaveth behind him on the earth, yet still  
Fain is the slayer, who that one man slew,  
Kin to forsake, and seek out countries new.  
But we the bulwark of the state have slain,  
Even the flower of all the youth that grew  
In Ithaca—what refuge can *we* gain ?  
Therefore, I pray, take thought if any help remain.”

## 16

And him the wise Telemachus addressed :  
“ Thou for us both take counsel, father dear ;  
For among men they say thy mind is best,  
And of all mortals, who live breathing here,  
None stands thy rival or can make thee fear.  
I too will follow thee with all my heart,  
Such as I am ; nor shall the world not hear  
Our fame in battle and each prudent art,  
If the Fates will, and if Athene take our part.”

## 17

And wise Odysseus answering spake anon :  
“ Now will I speak what seemeth in mine eyes  
The best : first bathe, and put clean raiment on,  
And bid the servants also do likewise.  
Then let the sweet bard, skilled in minstrelsies,  
Lead with shrill harp the sprightly dance, that they  
Who passing take note of our revelries,  
Or that dwell near us in the town, may say  
That the fair queen doth hold her marriage-feast to-day.

## 18

“ So through the city shall be blown about  
No word, no rumour, of the suitors slain,  
Till to our well-farmed woodland we come out,  
There to take thought, if haply the Sire deign  
Into our hands to pour some gift of gain.”  
Thus spake he, leaning on the pillar tall,  
And they well heard him, and obeyed right fain,  
Washed, and put on clean raiment, each and all.  
Also the women obeyed, and came into the hall.

## 19

Then took the bard divine the hollow lyre,  
And of the sprightly dance and music sweet  
Stirred in their breasts a very warm desire.  
There with loud minstrelsies the great dome beat,  
And the low thunder of their flying feet.  
And each that heard it from afar off said :  
“ Some one hath married the fair queen, I weet.  
Heartless, to quit the house of him she wed  
In sweet youth, nor abide till he reclaims her bed !”

## 20

Thus spake they, knowing not the things that were.  
Meanwhile the staid housedame Eurynome  
Washed in his own house and anointed fair  
Divine Odysseus. From the bath came he,  
In tunic and rich robe clad beautifully.  
And on his form new grace Athene shed,  
And ampler made him, and more large to see.  
Curled like the hyacinth divinely spread  
The full locks, clustering dark, around his glorious head.



## 21

As when some artist, fired with plastic thought,  
Silver doth overlay with liquid gold,  
One by Hephæstus and Athene taught  
Fair-shining forms, instinct with love, to mould,  
She thus the king's head did with grace enfold  
And the fair shoulders. Like a god in mien  
He, clothed in beauty, glistening to behold,  
Came and reclined where he before had been,  
And, on the pillar leaning, thus addressed the queen :

## 22

“ Lady, the gods that in Olympus dwell  
Have, beyond female women, given to thee  
Heart as of flint, which none can soften well.  
Lives not a wife who could endure, save thee,  
Her lord to slight, who roaming earth and sea  
Comes to his own land in the twentieth year.  
Haste, Eurycleia, and go spread for me  
Some couch, that I may sleep, but not with her—  
For, as it seems, her breast than steel is more severe.”

## 23

But him the wise Penelope addressed :  
“ Friend, neither I exalt, nor rate thee low,  
Nor marvel overmuch ; but in my breast  
Too well thy features and thy form I know,  
Such as from Ithaca long years ago  
Thee to a far land the fleet bark conveyed.  
But go, nurse, and his own choice bed bestow  
Outside the bridal chamber which he made,  
And rugs and fleeces pile, that he be warmly laid.”

## 24

Thus she spake, proving him. He, direly stirred,  
Quick to his loyal wife made answer there :  
“ Wife, thou hast spoken a soul-piercing word.  
Tell me what hand hath set my couch elsewhere.  
Yea, for a skilled man very hard it were,  
Save a god helped him, who can all things do.  
Lives not a mortal, though life's flower he bear,  
Could stir it. For with that bed's growth there grew  
A wondrous sign, my work ; none else that secret knew.

## 25

“ For in the court an olive stem there grew,  
Stout as a column, and thick leaves it bore.  
Round it a chamber, built with stones, I threw,  
And with a tight roof firmly spanned it o'er,  
And by the threshold hung the well-framed door ;  
Then cut the olive hair, and smooth and round  
Planed to a basement on the chamber-floor  
The wide trunk, like a bedpost in the ground,  
And with a wimble pierced it, for the core was sound.

## 26

“ So, thence beginning, I the bed did mould  
Shapely and perfect, and the whole inlaid  
With ivory and silver and rich gold ;  
And, well stretched out, a leathern work I made,  
Shining with purple. I have now displayed  
This sign, this marvel ; nor at all I know  
Whether my couch in the old place hath stayed,  
Or some one could elsewhere my work bestow,  
When first he had cut through the olive stump below.”

## 27

He ended, and were loosed her knees and heart,  
When she the tokens of her husband knew.  
Then from her eyelids the quick tears did start,  
And she ran to him from her place, and threw  
Her arms about his neck, and a warm dew  
Of kisses poured upon him, and thus spake :  
“ Frown not, Odysseus ; thou art wise and true !  
But God gave sorrow, and hath grudged to make  
Our path to old age sweet, nor willed us to partake

## 28

“ Youth’s joys together. Yet forgive me this,  
Nor hate me that when first I saw thy brow  
I fell not on thy neck, and gave no kiss,  
Nor wept in thy dear arms as I weep now.  
For in my breast a bitter fear did bow  
My soul, and I lived shuddering day by day,  
Lest a strange man come hither, and avow  
False things, and steal my spirit, and bewray  
My love ; such guile men scheme, to lead the pure astray.

## 29

“ For neither Argive Helen, seed divine,  
Had with a strange man mingled in love’s chain,  
If she had known that heroes of high line  
Should to Achaia lead her home again.  
But the god stamped her with a grievous stain,  
Stirring her soul to dare a shameful wrong ;  
Nor of set mind she pondered the dark skein  
Of sorrow, fated to befall ere long,  
Whence first came even to us our load of anguish strong.

## 30

“ But now, since clearly thou unfoldest this,  
The secret of our couch, which none hath read,  
Save only thee and me and Actoris,  
Whom my sire gave me, when I first was wed,  
To guard the chamber of our bridal bed—  
Now I believe against mine own belief.”  
She ending a desire of weeping bred  
Within him, and in tears the noble chief  
Clasped his true wife, exulting in their glorious grief.

## 31

Sweet as to swimmers the dry land appears,  
Whose bark Poseidon in the angry sea  
Strikes with a tempest, and in pieces tears,  
And a few swimmers from the white deep flee,  
Crusted with salt foam, and with tremulous knee  
Spring to the shore exulting ; even so  
Sweet was her husband to Penelope,  
Nor from his neck could she at all let go  
Her white arms, nor forbid her thickening tears to flow.

## 32

And now the rosy-fingered Dawn had found  
Them weeping, but Athene a new scheme  
Planned, and the long Night held within her bound,  
Nor from the rolling river of Ocean's stream  
Suffered the golden-thronèd Dawn to beam,  
Or yoke the horses that bear light to men,  
Lampus and Phaethon, her fiery team,  
Who draw the chariot of the Dawn. And then  
Answered the wise Odysseus to his wife agen :

## 33

" Wife, the end is not yet, but there abide  
 Hard labours and extreme which I must bear.  
 For thus to me in Hades prophesied  
 Soul of Tiresias, the Theban seer,  
 In that day when I sought death's kingdom drear,  
 My friends' return enquiring and my own.  
 But come with me to bed, that we may cheer  
 With sleep and love our souls, ere night be flown."  
 Whereto the wise Penelope replied anon :

## 34

" Spread shall thy couch be, whensoe'er thou will.  
 Thine is the house ; for to thy native land  
 The gods have led thee through long years of ill,  
 And thy feet suffer on our hearth to stand.  
 But now the labour which thou hast in hand  
 Tell me, which God hath made thy lips avow ;  
 For the time comes when all that Fate hath planned  
 Shall not be hidden—it were no worse now  
 To learn what yet must happen, though I know not how."

## 35

And quickly to his dear wife answered he :  
 " Why urge me to unfold, to thine own pain,  
 This fortune ? it is sad even for me.  
 Take up an oar he bade me, and again  
 Roam through the countries, hill and valley and plain,  
 Till at the last I light upon a race  
 Which eat not salt, nor know the rolling main,  
 Nor vermeil ships, whose sails from place to place  
 Waft them like wings, nor oars that sweep the marble face

## 36

“Of ocean. And this notable clear sign  
He told, not easy to escape my care :  
When that a man shall meet me in my line  
Of travel, and accost me, and declare  
On my illustrious shoulder that I bear  
A winnowing-van, he bade me plant mine oar  
In that same spot, and sacrifices fair,  
A ram, a bull, and a swine-mounting boar,  
Slay to Poseidon, monarch of the waters hoar ;

## 37

“Then return home, and sacred hecatombs  
To the immortal gods in order due,  
To all and each that dwell beneath the domes  
Of heaven, present ; and lastly shall ensue  
My calm death, wafted from the billows blue,  
And I shall fall in a serene old age,  
Painless and ripe, with nothing left to do,  
While a blest people at the gates engage  
My sovereign care. Such future his true lips presage.”

## 38

And answer made the wise Penelope :  
“If for old age the gods annul thy curse,  
Hope is, though late, that thou shalt yet be free  
From all thy sorrows.” Thus did they converse.  
Meantime, above, Eurynome and the nurse  
Make up the bed with raiment soft and fair,  
Under the blazing torchlight ; and the nurse,  
When they had spread the couch with studious care,  
Back to the house, for sleep, right quickly made repair.

## 39

But them Eurynome, with torch aflame,  
Led to the chamber, and then went her way.  
Glad to the rites of the old couch they came.  
The prince, the herdsman, and the swineherd stay  
Their feet from dancings, and bid pause from play  
The women, and along the hall recline.  
But when they twain, where on the couch they lay,  
Had taken their sweet fill of loves divine,  
Then they conversed together of their former tyne.

## 40

There she, divine of women, told him all  
Her suffering that she bore from day to day,  
While the fell suitors slew within the hall  
Beeves and fat sheep, and drained the wine away.  
Also Odysseus to his wife did say  
All the dread strife which on his foes he won,  
And the sad labour on himself that lay ;  
She ever with enjoyment listening on ;  
Nor to her eyes came sleep, until the tale was done.

## 41

First told he of the Cicons tamed, and then  
How through the main to the rich land they drew  
Where dreams the tribe of Lotus-eating men ;  
And how no pity the dire Cyclops knew,  
But his guests ate, and paid for whom he slew ;  
And how to Æolus he came, who well  
Dismissed him ; but not yet was he to view  
His country ; for from heaven the tempest fell,  
And whirled him back, deep groaning, o'er the sea's dark swell.

## 42

Of the wide-gated Læstrygonian town  
He spake, where they destroyed his friends and fleet,  
Whence in the black ship he escaped alone ;  
Of Circe's wondrous wiles, and how his feet  
Trod the dark realm of Hades, to entreat  
Soul of Tiresias the Theban seer,  
What time he sailed in well-manned bark complete  
Past the divine sea-river, and saw there  
His dead friends, and the mother who him nursed and bare.

## 43

And how he heard, what none but he might tell,  
Strain of the Sirens o'er the marbly mere,  
And reached the Wandering Rocks, Charybdis fell,  
And the dread Scylla, of whose doom ran clear  
No sailors yet that born of women were ;  
And how his comrades the Sun's kine had slain,  
And thunderer Zeus with flaming bolt clave sheer  
The swift bark, and cut off in the wild main  
All, all alike ; he only his own soul did gain.

## 44

How, tost by waves, he reached Ogygia's isle,  
On the tenth day delivered from the deep,  
And found the nymph Calypso, who long while  
Nursed him in hollow caves, his love to reap,  
Who for his dear wife could but mourn and weep ;  
And how she promised with her lips that he  
There should remain within her island-keep  
Blest with an ageless immortality,  
But in his breast the soul would not persuaded be.



## 45

And how sore-laboured at the last he won  
The land of the divine Phæacian race,  
Who like a god him honoured, and sent on  
Rich with all gifts of much exceeding grace,  
Brass, gold, and raiment, to his native place,  
On shipboard. This was the last word he spoke,  
Ere the sweet slumber, rushing down apace,  
Loosened his limbs, and the tired senses took,  
And from his mind each care and sad remembrance shook.

## 46

Then did Athene a new thought devise ;  
And when she judged within her heart that he  
Had with a full sleep now regaled his eyes,  
And from desire of his dear wife lay free,  
Then from the rolling river of Ocean she  
Drave up the golden Dawn, to fill the land  
With light for mortals ; and right eagerly  
Sprang from the couch Odysseus, and did stand  
Beside his wife, and spake, and added this command :

## 47

“ Wife, a long warfare to the end we fought,  
Thou with thy tears bewailing me for lost,  
I with all sorrows which the gods have brought,  
Who far off chained me from my native coast.  
Now, since we both gain what we longed for most,  
Thou in my halls this wealth securely keep,  
And for the flocks, which that ungodly host  
Hath slaughtered, I myself will payment reap  
By plunder and free gift, till my folds teem with sheep.

## 48

“ But to the woodland farm I now depart,  
To visit my dear father, who indeed  
Grieves for my sake a sore grief in his heart.  
And thou, my wife, though prudent, yet give heed  
And hear me. As the sun goes up, will speed  
Fame of the murder of the young men slain.  
Therefore with all thy maidens now proceed  
Hence to the upper chamber ; there remain  
Withdrawn, regard not any, and all quest refrain.”

## 49

He spake, and on his shoulders quickly threw  
Fair arms, and bade Telemachus his son,  
The herdsman of the kine, and swineherd too,  
Take up their weapons and their mail put on.  
So they obeyed, and robed in brass anon  
Their breasts, and with Odysseus went their way.  
Already on the earth the sunlight shone  
When, by Athene wrapt in darkness, they  
Passed from the gates, unseen beneath the eyes of day.



# BOOK XXIV.

ODYSSEUS DISCOVERS HIMSELF TO LAERTES, AND IS ESTABLISHED  
IN HIS KINGDOM.



## BOOK XXIV.

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1

**MEANWHILE** the spirits of the suitors quelled  
Cyllenian Hermes summoned forth and drew  
Down from the sunlight : in his hands he held  
Wand of pure gold, right beautiful to view,  
Even that wand which can men's eyes subdue,  
Whomso he listeth in long sleep to cast,  
Or sleeping wake to breathe and feel anew.  
Therewith he led them : the ghosts gibbering fast  
Flocked with low whirr behind him, as adown he passed.

2

And as when bats, amid the far recess  
Of some great cave, flit gibbering and squeak low,  
If from the rock, where clusteringly they press,  
One fall away, and the long chain let go,  
While with soft whirr they huddle again ; e'en so  
Clustered the dim ghosts gibbering in their fear,  
Whom Hermes, giver of all good below,  
On through the wide waste places, cold and drear,  
Down to the sunless land was leading void of cheer.

## 3

So were they led beyond the Ocean-streams,  
The White Rock, and the portals of the Sun,  
And past the dim land of the people of Dreams.  
Thence quick the fields of asphodel they won,  
Where souls of men, whose toils on earth are done,  
Dwell shadowy and phantasmal. There they found  
Soul of Patroclus, and of Peleus' son,  
And Aias after him the fairest crowned  
For beauty, and the brave Antilochus renowned.

## 4

Thus after Hermes a thin shadowy host  
They came down clustering ; and anear them drew  
Silent in sorrow Agamemnon's ghost,  
Girt with the souls whom dark Ægisthus slew.  
Him, as he came, the son of Peleus knew,  
And spake : " O child of Atreus, thee we thought  
Dearer to thundering Zeus thy whole life through  
Than all men, while in Troy such toils we wrought ;  
Yea, for so many and brave round thee their captain fought.

## 5

" Yet was the doom of Fate, which none can flee  
Of all earth's mortals that have been and are,  
First in thine own land to alight on thee ;  
So that in Troia it were happier far  
Crowned with full glory to have died in war.  
Then had the full host of Achaians all  
Entombed thee, and a fame, which none could mar,  
Come to thy child an heirloom in the hall.  
Now by a death most piteous thou wast doomed to fall."

## 6

Soul of the son of Atreus him addressed :  
“ O lord Achilleus, like the gods on high,  
Hail, son of Peleus, above heroes blest,  
Who far from Argos didst in Troia die,  
With all the flower about thee falling nigh  
Of Ilion and Achaia, friend and foe ;  
While, careless of thine old car-mastery,  
Thou, where the dust whirled eddying to and fro,  
A great man, large in death, wast mightily lying low !

## 7

“ All day we battled, nor at all through night  
Had rested, but that Zeus a hurricane sent.  
So to the ships we bare thee from the fight,  
Laid on a couch thy limbs magnificent,  
Cleansed with warm water and with oil, and bent  
In warm tears over thee, and shore our hair.  
From the sea-chambers with her sea-nymphs went  
Thy mother, for the news came even there ;  
Moved o'er the deep loud stirrings of an ominous air.

## 8

“ Then on the host a trembling fear laid hold,  
And they had rushed in tumult to the fleet,  
But one man, versed in many things and old,  
Nestor, whose mind was ever the most discreet,  
Thus with good heart restrained their hurrying feet :  
‘ Stay, sons of Argos, and hold back from flight !  
’Tis but the mother from her ocean-seat,  
Who with her fair nymphs cometh up to-night,  
Her dear son to behold, who hath been slain in fight.’



## 9

“ He spake, and the Achaians ceased from dread.  
And all the daughters of the old sea-king  
Stood round thee, and with tears bewailed their dead,  
And round thy form immortal robes did fling.  
There the nine Muses a sweet dirge did sing,  
Responsive each to other, and their cry  
Came on the army, both to serf and king ;  
Nor could thy soul have seen a tearless eye, [high.  
Sang with such power the Muse, and poured her voice on

## 10

“ Ten days and seven, with all their space of night,  
Both gods and mortals we bewailed thee there.  
But on the morning of the eighteenth light  
We gave thee to the fire, and victims fair  
Slew round thee, sheep and oxen ; and the air  
Hung sweet with smoke, thou burning in rich state  
Of robes divine, sweet honey, and unguents rare,  
While with a noise of arms about thee wait  
Horsemen alike and footmen ; and the cry was great.

## 11

“ At sunrise, when the fire had ceased to burn,  
Thy cinders white in oil and unmixed wine  
We gathered, and thy mother gave an urn  
All-golden, calling it the gift divine  
Of Dionysus, moulded from the mine  
By work-renowned Hephæstus : there abide  
The ashes of Patroclus, mixed with thine ;  
Antilochus lies separate at thy side,  
Best loved of all thy comrades, when Patroclus died.

## 12

“ These with a glorious tomb we mounded o’er,  
We the divine host of Achaian men,  
Toward Hellespontus, on a beard of shore,  
Sign for all mariners afar to ken  
Now and hereafter. But thy mother then  
Asked of the gods, and offered prizes fair.  
I in the funeral-rites of many men  
Have borne my portion in the realms of air,  
When kings die, and the youths their manly games prepare ;

## 13

“ Yet most I marvelled at the prizes brave  
Which (for the gods thee held exceeding dear)  
Silver-foot Thetis at thy funeral gave.  
So wast thou famous even on thy bier,  
And the whole world, Achilleus, shall revere  
Thy glory. As for me, when the long strife  
Was spun for ever, what had I to cheer ?  
Hard at my home Zeus direly reft my life,  
By hands of dark Ægisthus and my cursèd wife.”

## 14

Thus mutually they talked ; and near them drew  
Hermes the Argicide, still leading on  
Shades of the dead men, whom Odysseus slew.  
And they twain with amazement moved anon  
Straightforward ; and the soul of Atreus’ son  
Looked on them, and discerned amid the host  
Melantheus’ child, renowned Amphimedon,  
His guest-friend once on Ithaca’s rough coast,  
And unto him the first spake Agamemnon’s ghost :

## 15

“Amphimedon, how sought ye this dark place,  
 All of you picked men in the prime of life,  
 Whom in a people one would choose for grace?  
 Did then Poseidon utter loud winds rife  
 Against you, and with storms cut off your life?  
 Or on dry land, when ye had fled the deep,  
 Did rude barbarians maim you in fell strife,  
 And, as ye plundered their fat kine and sheep,  
 Slay you, to save their city, and their wives to keep?”

## 16

“I pray thee answer—for I boast to be  
 Thy guest-friend; yea, remember how I came  
 With Menelaus, chief divine, to thee,  
 Urging Odysseus o’er the seas, to tame  
 Proud Ilion in the dust, for that foul shame  
 Wrought by the Trojan, a long grief to all!  
 We the broad waves passed, and repassed the same,  
 And a whole moon did wax and wane and fall,  
 When with our arts we lured Odysseus from his hall.”

## 17

And the soul answered of Amphimedon:  
 “Atrides Agamemnon, glorious chief,  
 Well I remember how these things were done;  
 And now will I recount our evil grief,  
 And how death came, as comes by night a thief.  
 We of Odysseus’ wife the suitors were.  
 She nor refused the marriage, nor was lief  
 To crown it with fulfilment, but still bare  
 Doom in her heart against us, and a fate unfair.

18

“ Now of all others hearken this device  
Which in her mind the queen did frame. She reared  
There in her halls a mighty loom of price.  
Anon before the suitors she appeared,  
And said : ‘ Young men, my suitors, what I feared  
Is come ; divine Odysseus is no more :  
Woo ye, but leave my widowhood revered  
A little while, until my task is o’er,  
Lest my long-purposed work fall void for evermore.

19

“ ‘ I for Laertes weave a funeral-sheet  
Against the final debt that he must pay ;  
And I were shamed the Achaian dames to meet,  
Should the long slumber find but shroudless clay  
Of one who owned much lordship in his day.’  
So did she speak amid the suitor-throng,  
And so persuaded our large heart gave way.  
Daily she weaved ; then, working grievous wrong,  
By night the woof unwound, with torches ranged along.

20

“ So for three years she prospered in her wile.  
But when the fourth came, with the seasons’ flight,  
One of her women, making known the guile,  
Showed us the queen unwinding in the night.  
So force, not will, constrained her to the right.  
When the whole sheet was woven on the loom,  
And like the moon or sun shone clean and white  
With splendour, then came by an evil doom  
Odysseus, whence I know not, to the swineherd’s home.

## 21

“ Thither by ship divine Odysseus’ son  
From sandy Pylos sailed ; and when they two  
Had for the suitors evil schemes begun,  
Back to the far-famed town the prince withdrew  
First, and then after him Odysseus, who,  
Like to a poor old man in form and mien,  
Came with the swineherd, sad and pale to view ;  
He, feebly creeping, on a staff did lean,  
And evil rags for raiment on his limbs were seen.

## 22

“ So on a sudden he appeared, and there  
None, from the eldest downward, knew the king.  
Hard words we gave, and hurlings, and rough fare ;  
He in his own halls each unworthy thing  
Bore, and to patience his brave soul did bring.  
But when the counsel of high Zeus at last  
Inly aroused him, with his son the king  
Took the fair arms, and to the chamber passed,  
And there in secret laid them, and the bolts made fast.

## 23

“ He in shrewd craftiness his wife then bade  
Set for our strife the iron rings and bow,  
The fountain of our fate and murder sad.  
There miserably in might we failed, and lo !  
None, from the eldest downward, drew the bow.  
But when it came into Odysseus’ hand,  
Then with one voice we sternly cried out No !  
Nor willed him have it, though he oft demand.  
Telemachus alone did our fierce will withstand.

## 24

“ So then divine Odysseus took the bow  
And strung it, and behold the shrill nerve sang,  
And flew the keen dart through the iron row.  
He with his weapon on the threshold sprang,  
Poured out the arrows, and the pavement rang.  
Peering with terrible eye, he first of all  
Antinous shot, who bowed with a dire clang ;  
Then launched his death-bolts on the rest, who fall,  
One after one, thick corpses, in the shadowy hall.

## 25

“ Then that some god was on their side we found,  
When through the wide house, hot with rage, they pour,  
Turning about, and smite us, while a sound  
Rings, of heads crashing, and the earth runs gore.  
Such, Agamemnon, was the doom we bore ;  
And, all uncared for, in the house we lie ;  
Nor yet have tidings come to each one’s door,  
So that dear friends might wash our wounds, and cry  
Sad dirges for our fall—the meed of those that die.”

## 26

And Agamemnon’s spirit thus replied :  
“ Now, wary-wise Odysseus, hail to thee,  
Who with much virtue hast regained thy bride.  
O the kind heart of pure Penelope !  
O to her first one love how true was she !  
Nought shall make dim the flower of her sweet fame  
For ever, but the gods unceasingly  
Shall to the earth’s inhabitants her name,  
Wide on the wings of song, with endless praise proclaim.

## 27

“ For she was not like Clytæmnestra found,  
False wife, the husband of her youth that slew,  
Making her name inherit an ill sound  
In earthly song for ever ; for she drew  
On the whole sex of women, even the true,  
Bad fame, and caused them to partake her curse ! ”  
Thus, mid the dark womb of the earth, they two  
In Hades’ house did mutually converse,  
And he to Atreus’ son did all their doom rehearse.

## 28

But from the city went the others down,  
And to the good farm of Laertes came,  
Which long ago with toil he made his own.  
There stood the house, and round it passed a frame  
Of woodwork, and his few serfs in the same  
Ate, drank, and slumbered, as occasion pressed.  
And therein dwelt an old Sicilian dame,  
Who on the farm, were he at work or rest,  
Tended the old man well, and watched on his behest.

## 29

And brave Odysseus, when he came in sight,  
Turned to his son and servants, and thus spake :  
“ Go ye, I pray you, to the house outright,  
And quickly of his swine the choicest take,  
And a rich feast against my coming make.  
But to my sire will I depart, and try  
If the remembrance in his mind awake,  
And he peruse me with a father’s eye,  
Or know me not ; for now hath many a year gone by.”

## 30

He spake, and his own arms of warlike fame  
Then gave them, and the house they quickly won.  
He to the fruitful vineyard nearer came,  
Nor Dolius, nor a servant, nor a son  
Found, through the large estate as he went on.  
They, for the vineyard to the winds lay bare,  
Under the old man's guidance now were gone  
Stones on the hill to gather here and there,  
That for their master's vines a fence they might prepare.

## 31

Thus he his aged father, all alone,  
Found in the well-placed garden, with sad mien  
Weeding around a plant, and stooping down.  
Patched rags unseemly on his form were seen,  
And greaves upon his legs, now wasted lean,  
Lest the thorns tear him ; on each hand a glove  
Working he wore, against the brambles keen,  
And on his locks a goatskin helm above,  
Feeding the long deep sorrow of a father's love.

## 32

Whom when divine Odysseus heeded there,  
Worn with old age, with many griefs opprest,  
Standing unseen behind a well-grown pear  
He shed tears, and debated which were best,  
Whether to fall upon his father's breast  
And the whole story of his fate make clear,  
How from affliction, toil, and wide unrest,  
Safe he returned home in the twentieth year,  
Or first with words enquire, till all the truth appear.



## 33

And in his mind it seemed more gainful so,  
First with soul-piercing words to prove him there.  
The old man in his orchard, stooping low,  
Round the plant weeded ; and his son came near  
And spake : “ Old man, thou art not slack to rear  
Thy fruit-trees, nor a fool in husbandry.  
Lives not a plant, fig, olive, vine, or pear,  
But thou with art hast trained it tenderly,  
Nor in thy garden-beds a drooping flower I see.

## 34

“ But now another thing will I declare,  
Nor thou, I pray, feel anger in thy breast.  
Thyself art husbanded with no good care,  
But marred with mean old age, and foully drest.  
'Tis not for sloth thy master leaves thee prest  
With leanness and contempt ; nor, as I ween,  
Aught slavish, and unworthy of the best,  
Or in thy form or stature, may be seen,  
But like a king thou seemest in thy face and mien.

## 35

“ Like one thou seemest who should bathe and eat  
And lie down softly—'tis an old man's due.  
But now this tidings would I fain entreat,  
Who owns thy service, and this garden who ?  
And tell me also this, and tell me true :  
Is the land Ithaca, as one now said  
That met me ? who methinks scant manners knew,  
Nor stayed to hear me, nor my question read,  
Nor of my guest-friend told me, if alive or dead.

## 36

“ For I will tell thee what I have to say ;  
Therefore observe, and to my tale give ear.  
At home, in my dear country, on a day  
A guest I entertained ; and none more dear  
Of strangers ever to my house came near.  
That man from Ithaca did claim his race,  
Sprung from a line whose rumour all men hear,  
And to Laertes his own birth did trace,  
Even the glorious son of lord Arkeisias.

## 37

“ Whom with fond heart I cherished as I could,  
And for a token of my courtesy  
Gave talents seven of gold, well-wrought and good,  
A bowl of silver, flowered, and fair to see,  
Twelve single cloaks, twelve robes of tapestry,  
Twelve costly tunics, and twelve mantles fair ;  
And women, beautiful exceedingly,  
Whom he himself chose, in his train to bear,  
I gave him, four in all, who skilled in house-craft were.”

## 38

And to his son with tears the old man spake :  
“ Friend, 'tis the land thou seekest ; but abide  
Fierce men therein, who dire confusion make.  
And for the gifts which thou didst then provide,  
Vain were they all, and like himself have died.  
Were he in Ithaca alive this day,  
Large in requital were the gifts supplied,  
And much sweet kindness would he haste to pay.  
Such was the custom still, whoever came this way.

## 39

“ But come now, tell me this, and show me plain:  
How many seasons have now passed and gone  
Since thou thy hapless friend didst entertain,  
Whose life so miserably the Fates have spun,  
Thy friend, and, if I dream not, once my son?  
Who from his own hath perished far away,  
Reft of his country, and no grave hath won;  
But torn by fishes in the deep he lay,  
Or to wild beasts and birds on land became a prey.

## 40

“ Nor were his mother and his sire decreed  
To shroud him for the burning, nor lament  
Their own dear child, the offspring of our seed;  
No, nor the wife so goodly eminent  
In reason, riches, and a pure intent,  
Penelope herself, the dirge did cry  
Over her dear lord on the couch, nor bent  
To press the cold lip and the lightless eye,  
And the last rite fulfil, the meed of those that die.

## 41

“ But tell me truly, for I fain would know,  
Whence be thy parents, and thy country where,  
And where the bark, that o'er the wide sea-flow  
Thee with thy comrades to our island bare?  
Or to some trader didst thou pay thy fare,  
Who set thee on our shore, and went his way?”  
And answering spake the wise Odysseus there:  
“ Now the whole story thou dost bid me say,  
I will to thee set forth in order, as I may.

## 42

“ From Alybas I come, there lies my home,  
Child of Apheidas, Polypemon’s son,  
And I am named Eperitus. I roam  
By the god’s blast unwillingly sent on  
From Sicily; my bark hath moorings won  
Beyond the city. Since he left our strand,  
Even Odysseus, four full years are gone.  
Good birds of omen flocked on his right hand,  
When, with a glad farewell, he gladly left the land.

## 43

“ And still within our heart expected we  
To mix in friendship, and fair gifts bestow,  
Vain promise, each on other.” Thus spake he ;  
And on his father the black cloud of woe  
Came, and with both hands he began to throw  
Foul dust adown his white locks, groaning deep.  
And his son trembled, and fierce breath did blow,  
And, as the pulsing nostrils quiver and leap,  
Sprang to his sire, and spake, and kissed him, fain to weep.

## 44

“ I only am that man, my father dear,  
I only whom thou seekest : I at last  
Come to mine own land in the twentieth year.  
But cease thy groaning, and let tears be cast  
Far from thine eyes, for the old grief hath passed.  
No word of sorrow from thy lips let fall.  
For I will speak (and there is need of haste) :  
Now have I slain those suitors in the hall ;  
God made their own fierce deeds recoil upon them all.”

## 45

Then said Laertes, " If thou art indeed  
Odysseus, my own child, returned from far,  
Show me a sign which I may clearly read."  
He answered : " First consider well this scar,  
Dug, where the deep glens of Parnassus are,  
By the boar's tusk, when I had gone to see  
Autolycus my grandsire, ere the war,  
Thence to bring back what he had vowed to me,  
When to our house he came, fair largess and rich fee.

## 46

" Hear the trees also, which with kindly speech  
Thou gav'st me, when a child I followed thee  
All through the orchard, and made suit for each.  
Thou, mid the long rows passing, tree by tree,  
Their name and nature didst explain to me.  
Ten apples, forty fig-trees, pears thirteen  
Thou gavest, adding, when fit time should be,  
Fifty fair rows of vines, with corn between,  
Where, by the ripe hours laden, the full grapes are seen."

## 47

Then were the old man's heart and knees unstrung,  
When he the tokens of his dear son knew ;  
And round his neck with feeble arms he clung ;  
Whom to his breast divine Odysseus drew  
Fainting and pale. But when the wonted hue  
Came to his lips, and he revived again,  
He answering spake : " O Zeus, if it be true  
That the proud suitors their full guerdon gain,  
Surely in far Olympus ye, the gods, yet reign !

## 48

“ But now right sorely in my soul I fear  
Lest all the people come to make us die,  
And rouse the Cephallenians, when they hear.”  
And wary-wise Odysseus made reply :  
“ Take heart, my father ; let thy fear pass by.  
But to the house come now, that we may dine ;  
Near to the orchard is it ; and I bade hie  
Telemachus, the herdsman of the kine,  
And swineherd, there with zeal to furnish food and wine.”

## 49

So they departed, having spoken thus.  
And, when they came into the mansion fair,  
They found the swineherd and Telemachus  
And herdsman of the kine, dividing there  
Choice meat in portions ; and red wine they bear  
For mixing. But the old Sicilian dame  
Washed in his house the brave old man with care,  
And rubbed with glistening oil his aged frame ;  
And in a robe of purple from the bath he came.

## 50

And near him stood Athene, and did touch  
His limbs, and made him larger than before,  
And grander ; and his dear son marvelled much,  
And with rapt eyes perused him o'er and o'er,  
So like a semblance to the gods he wore,  
And at the last in wingèd words began :  
“ Some god, my father, who lives evermore,  
Sends thee a beautiful and blameless man  
Down from the bath ; thy mien all wonderingly we scan.”

## 51

And wise Laertes did in answer say :  
“ O Father Zeus, Athene, Phœbus, hear !  
Had I but in our house stood yesterday  
Such as men knew me when beyond the mere,  
Lord of the Cephalenians, I struck fear  
On Nericus, and all her bulwarks fell—  
Clothed in like power had I stood harnessed there,  
Soon had I fought the suitors, loosening well  
The knees of many, and made with glory thy heart swell !”

## 52

Thus they conversed together ; and the rest,  
When they had ceased from labour and arrayed  
The board, sat couched in order to the feast,  
And on the banquet eager hands they laid.  
Then Dolius came, and all his sons, o'erweighed  
With hard work ; for the old Sicilian dame,  
Their mother, called them, when the feast was made,  
Who with a tender service, void of blame,  
Cared for the old man's wants, since age upon him came.

## 53

These, when Odysseus they beheld and knew,  
Stood there astonied at the door : but he  
Spake in mild voice, “ Old man, sit down, fall to ;  
Spare to feel wonder : for a long time we  
Wait your arrival, and right hungry be.”  
He spake ; but Dolius forward rushed, and cast  
Both arms about his lord's neck lovingly,  
And on his wrist with tears imprinted fast  
Warm kisses, and thus spake in wingèd words at last :

## 54

“ O friend and master, who from far art come,  
Found to our joy, whom we despaired to find,  
Now by the gods brought safely to thy home,  
Hail, and rejoice, and may the gods be kind,  
And grant what thou desirest in thy mind !  
But now resolve me this, that I may know,  
If to the wise queen thou hast yet consigned  
News of thy coming ; or shall we now go  
Hence to her royal mansion, and the tidings show ?”

## 55

And wary-wise Odysseus answered there :  
“ Old man, these things unto my wife are known.  
Why for such matters art thou fain to care ?”  
He spake : the other to a burnished throne  
Passed, and reclined ; and all his sons anon  
Press round the brave Odysseus, and him greet  
With hand outstretched, and voice of kindest tone,  
Then by the aged Dolius take their seat ;  
And in the hall rejoicing they sit down to meat.

## 56

Rumour the while, in passing up and down,  
Told of the suitors' murder and black fate.  
All at the cry came hurrying through the town,  
Moaning and groaning, to Odysseus' gate,  
And took their own dead, and with funeral state  
Entombed them ; but the rest, each to his home,  
They send by fishers, ere the day wax late,  
In ships to the mainland, across the foam ;  
Then to the council hasten, with their hearts in gloom.



## 57

And in the midst with tears uprising spake  
Eupeithes, who an unforgetful grief  
Nursed in his dear heart for Antinous' sake,  
Slain ere his comrades by that noble chief :  
“ Friends, a great work, and even past belief,  
This man against the Achaians hath now planned,  
Who with the flower of all our island-fief  
Went, to the ruin both of ships and band,  
And now the best hath slain in Cephallenia's land.

## 58

“ Up, ere to Pylos the man sail with speed,  
Or divine Elis, where the Epeians sway ;  
Up, lest for ever a mute life we lead,  
And go down branded to the future day !  
Save that the murderers of our sons we slay,  
And of our brothers, 'twere not sweet to me  
Here in the sunlight on the earth to stay ;  
Dead with the dead would I much gladlier be.  
Up, then, arise, and smite them, ere they cross the sea !”

## 59

Thus, pouring forth a fire of tears, he spake,  
And at his voice on each Achaian there  
Came down soft pity for the old man's sake.  
Then from the palace of the king came near,  
And, where they sat, did in the midst appear  
Medon the herald and the bard divine,  
When now from sleep their eyes unsealed were,  
Each that beheld paused wondering for a sign,  
And with these words sage Medon did their ears incline :

## 60

“ Hearken, ye sons of Ithaca, this day !  
Not without fate, nor in the gods’ despite,  
Death for these men did brave Odysseus lay.  
Myself beheld a god, immortal, bright,  
One like to Mentor in his mien and height,  
Stand near him ; now would he shine forth and call  
Loud to the king, and cheer him on to fight,  
Now drive the huddling suitors, while they fall  
One after one, thick corpses, in the shadowy hall.”

## 61

He ceased, and all were taken with pale fear ;  
And hero Halitherses, Mastor’s son,  
Spake in the midst : he only, a true seer,  
Saw in his mind things past and to be done :  
He now with goodwill in the midst begun :  
“ Hearken, ye sons of Ithaca, to me !  
Know, by your own fault, O my friends, ye won  
This deed of vengeance which your eyes now see ;  
What your own hands have sown ye now reap miserably.

## 62

“ Vile were your sons, and ye restrained them not,  
Nor me nor Mentor would ye deign to hear.  
Careless ye saw them, and their crime forgot,  
Wasting a good man’s wealth, and year by year  
Dishonouring in the house his consort dear,  
While he, they vaunted, no return should know.  
Therefore now hearken, and my word reverse—  
Neither be wroth against the man, nor go,  
Lest in the end ye feel a self-inflicted woe.”

## 63

He ceased ; and more than half with uproar wild  
 Rise for Eueithes, and with one consent  
 Rush to their arms, disdainng counsels mild.  
 Flaming with brass before the gates they went,  
 Led by Eueithes, who with fond intent  
 Thought dreadly to avenge Antinous slain,  
 But now far other was to find the event,  
 Himself not fated to return again,  
 But to the earth go down, and his own doom sustain.

## 64

Then did Athene to Kronion call :  
 " Chiefest of thrones, great Kronides, our sire,  
 Say, is it peace ? or must there yet befall  
 War, and the peal of arms, and carnage dire ?"  
 Then to her answering spake the cloud-wrapt Sire :  
 " Child, 'twas thy counsel, the whole work is thine ;  
 Why come to me then, and my thought enquire ?  
 Thou causedst that Odysseus, chief divine,  
 Home should return, and slay them by the gods' design.

## 65

" Do what thou wilt ; but hear what seemeth best.  
 Since brave Odysseus hath the suitors paid,  
 Come, let them strike a league, and therein rest,  
 He to reign ever ; and we will cause to fade  
 From their remembrance the great doom he laid  
 On these their kinsmen ; till the land we fill  
 With love, wealth, joy, and a long peace be made."  
 He spake ; Athene, more impetuous still,  
 Down in hot flight came rushing from Olympus hill.

## 66

But when desire of meat and wine had passed,  
 Then the much-toiled divine Odysseus said :  
 " Some one look forth, if they be near at last !"  
 He spake ; and forth a son of Dolius sped,  
 Stood on the threshold, saw them near, and said :  
 " Arm ! they are near !"—and the king's four anou  
 Rushed to their arms, and six by Dolius led,  
 His sons ; e'en Dolius and Laertes don,  
 Both grey with age, bright arms, by need of war driv'n on.

## 67

They, when their limbs are robed in flaming brass,  
 Fling the doors open, in one band convene,  
 And, with Odysseus at their head, forth pass.  
 Near them Athene, child of Zeus, was seen,  
 Like unto Mentor both in voice and mien.  
 Glad was Odysseus, and addressed his son :  
 " Soon wilt thou prove, Telemachus, I ween,  
 How amid warriors a great name is won, [gone."  
 Nor shame thy sires, whose glory through the world hath

## 68

And wise Telemachus addressed the king :  
 " Soon of a truth, dear father, shalt thou see  
 That I no shame upon thy house will bring."  
 Heard him Laertes, and in joy spake he :  
 " O what a day, dear gods, is this for me,  
 When son and grandson for the palm contend !"  
 Near him Athene whispered : " 'Tis for thee,  
 Son of Arkeisias, and my dearest friend,  
 Zeus and Athene praying, thy long spear to send."

69

Thus spake Athene, and his soul grew hot,  
And to the virgin child of Zeus he prayed,  
And hurled the long spear, and Eupeithes shot  
Full in the helm, nor was the spear-head stayed  
Till through the brass an utter rent it made.  
Prone with a noise he fell, and his arms rang.  
Then rushed Odysseus, with his son to aid,  
And on the front rank lion-like they sprang,  
With spear and sword devouring, mid the war's rude clang.

70

And now full soon had they destroyed them all,  
And from that field let none return again,  
But that Athene with loud voice did call,  
Daughter of Zeus, and all their host restrain :  
" Ye sons of Ithaca, at last refrain  
Your minds from battle and rough hate severe !  
Come, without blood let each his cause maintain,  
And a true sentence be decided here !"  
So did she speak, and all were taken with pale fear.

71

Forth flew their arms and fell to earth, when she  
Spake with her voice, for each man's heart was gone ;  
And, hungry for their lives, they turn and flee.  
Then loud and far Odysseus cried anon,  
And, like an eagle of the clouds, came on  
With fell sloop, doubling up his strength ; and lo,  
Down from the heaven a flaming bolt there shone,  
Which Zeus Kronion in his wrath let go.  
Hard at Athene's feet it fell, and she spake so :

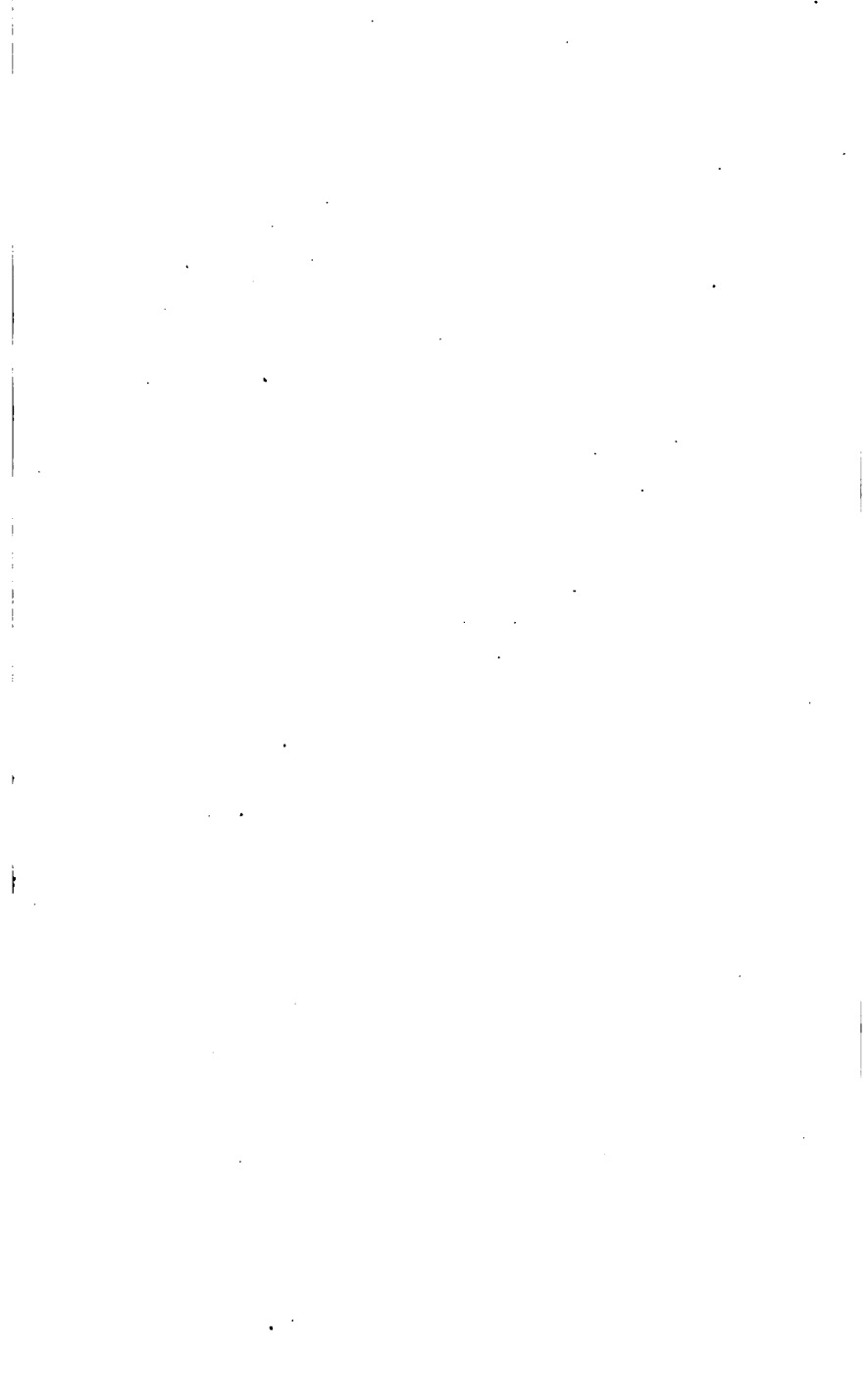
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“ Zeus-born Odysseus, wise Laertiades,  
Hold now thy hand, and stop the doubtful sway  
Of battle, lest Kronion thou displease !”  
Thus spake Athene : he to heart did lay  
Her counsel mild, and with glad thought obey.  
Then did Athene, child of Zeus, rejoice,  
And a firm compact to the after-day  
She, like to Mentor both in mien and voice,  
Sealed for both sides, and they consented with free choice.

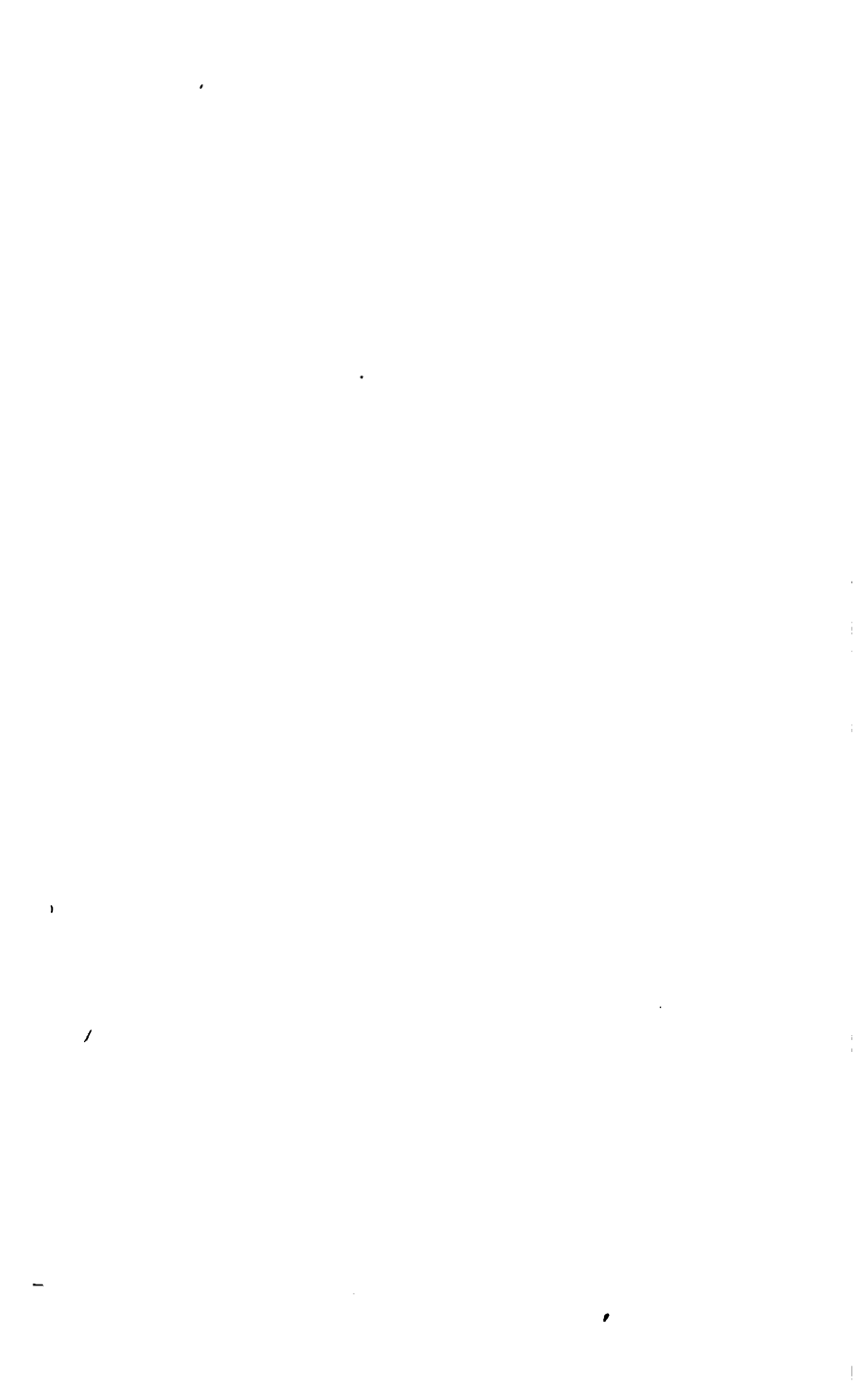
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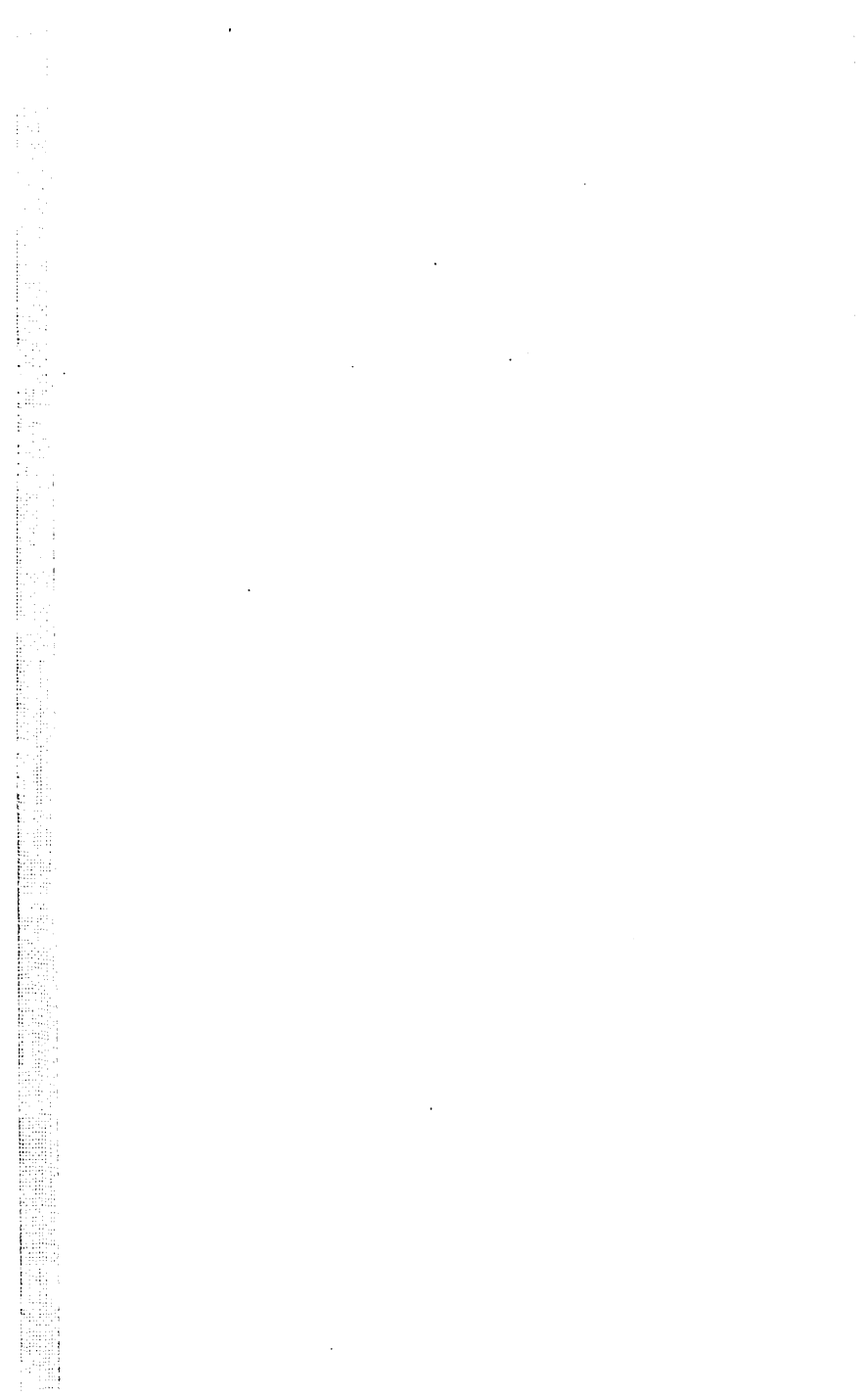
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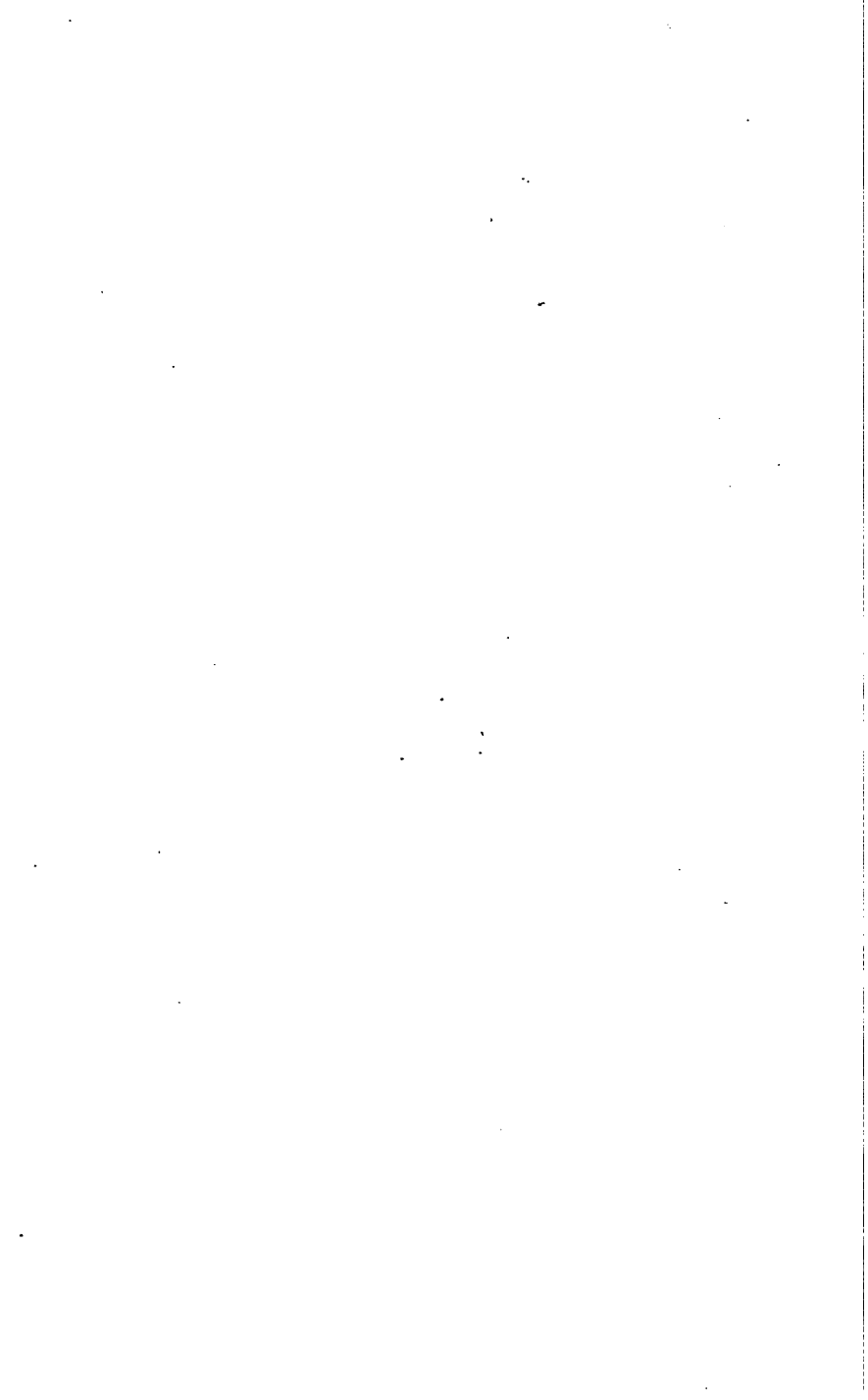
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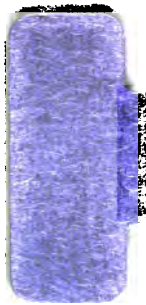








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